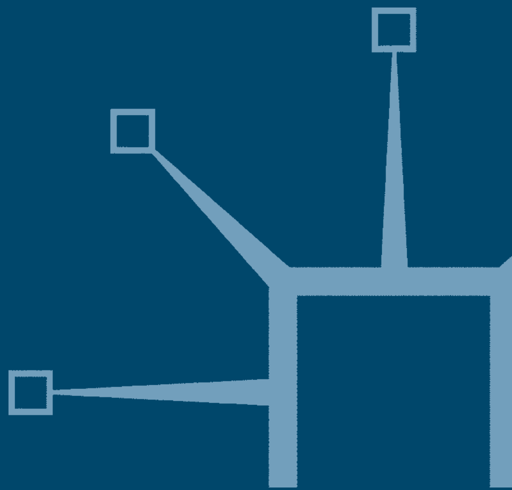
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THE MIDDLE EAST AND PALESTINE

GLOBAL POLITICS AND REGIONAL CONFLICT

Edited by

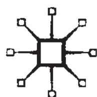
Dietrich Jung



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Contents

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Preface

Middle Eastern politics have frequently been discussed in terms of regional exceptionalism. Michael Mandelbaum, for instance, depicted Middle Eastern states as the most combative members of the international community. He painted the picture of a region in which, contrary to the rest of the world, "traditional motives for war—gold and God—are still alive."[1] In line with this rather stereotypical perspective, the Middle East is often viewed as a zone of conflict, in which competition for scarce resources ("gold") inevitably leads to violent encounters between actors that are under the influence of irrational ideas ("God"). In the course of the terror attacks of September 11, the subsequent American declaration of a "war on terror," and the U.S.-led war against Iraq these stereotypes have been reinvigorated. In particular the long and bloody history of the Palestine conflict has contributed much to corroborating this image of a region in which violence seems to be endemic. In terminating the so-called Middle East peace process, the "Al-Aqsa Intifada" marks another violent step in this conflict whose history of escalation into warlike proportions in the form of popular unrest, communal riots, anti-colonial insurgencies, guerilla and terror attacks, as well as civil and interstate wars, to a large extent has shaped Western perceptions of the Middle East.

It is the purpose of this book to argue against this stereotypical and exceptionalist image of the Middle East in general and of the Palestine conflict in particular. In addressing a variety of crucial interlacements between global, regional, and local developments, this collection of essays argues that the regional patterns of conflict and violence have been deeply molded by international and transnational relations, rather than being the result of a peculiar Middle Eastern culture. In this way, these essays contribute to the current debate about the salient linkages between the often contradictory local and global aspects of the globalization process of which Middle Eastern politics and the Palestine conflict are inseparable parts. Serving as an introduction, chapter 1 analyzes the evolution of the Palestine

conflict within the coordinates of global developments. From a theoretically guided historical perspective, it examines the evolution of Palestine as a territorial political entity and the formation of institutional and ideological features of Palestinian nationalism. The essay discerns behind the waves of violence and counterviolence of the Palestine conflict patterns of a kind of nationalist conflict with which European history is far more familiar than the stereotypes of Middle Eastern irrationality admit. In putting the emergence of the Palestine conflict within the historical set of global conditions and global constraints, this chapter serves as a broader background for the following studies. Moreover, it demonstrates that the war-prone formation of the Middle Eastern state system is tightly knitted into the logic of international politics.

The first major section of the book, then, presents three studies on the interconnection between global and regional political discourses. In chapter 2, Morten Valbjørn relates the exceptionalist and conflictual image of Middle Eastern politics to theoretical debates within the discipline of International Relations (IR). Valbjørn depicts IR as an important producer of images that impact on the academic and public perceptions of Middle Eastern conflicts. He concludes that two culturalist approaches to Middle Eastern politics have replaced the previous neglect of cultural diversity by IR scholars. However, this change has taken place with a conversely problematic and exaggerated focus on culture. Instead of being blind to culture, IR has become blinded by culture. While Valbjørn puts his focus on the international academic discourse about the Middle East, Götz Nordbruch deals with the merger between the global discourse on Nazism and the regional discourse on the Palestine conflict. In analyzing the perception of Nazism and the Holocaust in Egyptian media, Nordbruch investigates the reinterpretation of regional and international history in the light of the ongoing Israeli–Arab conflict. He shows that the break with the long-existing neglect of Nazism in Arab public media discourses has led to a variety of interpretations of Nazism and to an increased blending and reconstruction of regional and international historical narratives on Middle Eastern politics. Finally, Jeong-Min Seo's chapter on the "war on terror" that the Egyptian regime declared against Islamist groups in the 1990s concludes this series of three discourse analyses in part 1 of this book. His chapter presents the anti-Islamist campaign of the Mubarak regime and the way in which its policy makers tried both to manufacture an international antiterrorist discourse and to mobilize regional and international public opinion in order to build up a cooperative international

antiterrorism mechanism. In this way, the rhetoric of the Egyptian regime was a predecessor to U.S. President Bush's "war on terror" and the Egyptian state elite actively integrated its domestic struggle against Islamist groups into regional and global dynamics.

Part 2 of the book comprises three case studies of the interlacement of global, regional, and local political developments. Annabelle Böttcher presents an analysis of the way in which the secular and Alawi-dominated Baath regime in Syria has tried to cope with the growing role of Islam amongst the Sunni majority of the country. This study on Syrian Sunni and Shiite state Islam, which is based on several years of field experience, paints a fascinating picture of the triangular relationship between the Syrian regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and parts of the Shiite community in Lebanon. It not only reveals the logic of religious politics in Syria, but also points to the international political implications of the linkages between regional politics and transnational Islam. The mobilizing power of transnational Islam is also the focus of chapter 6. In his study on religious mobilizations in the Palestinian refugee camp Ain al-Helweh in Lebanon, Bernard Rougier examines the process of forging a new religiously defined identity amongst Palestinian refugees who reject the traditional symbols of Palestinian nationalism. Instead, they conceive themselves in the new terms of a transnational Islamist movement that is engaged in a global political struggle. Finally, Dan Tschirgi examines the Palestinian refugee question from quite a different angle. His chapter first reviews academic and official government discourses of the late 1990s on resolving the refugee problem and, then, relates them to the well-documented but little-known plan of Edward A. Norman, who, in the 1930s, proposed the transferring of the Arab population from Palestine to Iraq. In comparing Norman's plan to defuse the Palestine problem with the discussions of the 1990s, Tschirgi comes to the conclusion that, although in both cases the key third-party perspectives were rooted in well-intentioned humanist outlooks, they nevertheless failed to identify Palestinians as subjects who must determine their own futures. The book concludes with an epilogue by Walid Kazziha, who analyzes the various Arab discourses that followed the terror attacks of September 11 as they were documented in the important Arab daily *Al-Hayat*.

Without making the list too long, some of those who made this book possible must be named. Prime amongst these are certainly all the contributors to this book, whom I would like to thank for their efforts to provide me with the remarkable results of their ongoing research projects. Their intellectual input and their field experience

were instrumental for the success of this book project. I am in particular indebted to Walid Kazziha, who read and commented on some of the draft chapters and who directed, along with me, a four-day workshop at the Third Mediterranean Social Research Meeting in March 2002. With regard to this workshop, I am grateful to the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute in Florence, where some of the chapters were intensively discussed. In particular, I wish to thank the coordinator of the Centre's Mediterranean Programme, Imco Brouwer, and his team for their excellent organization of this workshop, thus laying the foundation stone for this book. Second, the overall coordination of this book project and the discussion of its scholarly content depended on connecting scholars who lived and worked in Beirut, Cairo, and Copenhagen. This was only made possible by the financial support of the Carlsberg Foundation, which awarded me with a travel grant in the broader framework of a research project on Middle Eastern security. Third, I would like to express my gratitude to Catherine Schwerin for her careful English-language editing of this volume. Last but not least, I warmly thank the editor of Palgrave, David Pervin, who not only encouraged this project, but also provided, with his team, the technical and economic assistance that is necessary to turn a project such as this into a book.

Dietrich Jung,
Copenhagen, October 2003

NOTE

1. Michael Mandelbaum (1998) "Is Major War Obsolete?" *Survival*, 40 (4): 20–38.

Introduction



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Chapter 1



Global Conditions and Global Constraints: The International Paternity of the Palestine Conflict

Dietrich Jung

Introduction

In sharp contrast to the fashionable announcement of the doomsday of territoriality,[1] the Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada essentially revolves around the final territorial consolidation of the Palestinian question. With its territorial focus, this new round of warfare between Israel and the Palestinians that broke out in September 2001 points to the core of this century-old conflict: the asymmetric power struggle between two nations that claim the same territory. Given this territorial core of the conflict, the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel seems to be an inevitable precondition for peace. The immanent relationship between land and people, which is a major motif in the writings of the famous Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani, has molded Palestinian nationalism and the national political identity of a people held together by shared experiences of flight, uprooting, expulsion, dispersal, and occupation. After decades of marginalization and statelessness, anything short of the foundation of their own nation-state would be unacceptable for the Palestinians.[2] This was evident in the words of Mahmud Darwish when he addressed

the Arab world on the occasion of the fifty-third anniversary of the foundation of the Israeli state. Against the backdrop of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Darwish said:

> For the Palestinians the meaning of this war consists in their being subjected to continual uprooting, in their transformation into refugees on their own land and beyond it, in the attempt, following the occupation of their land and history, to banish their existence, to turn their existence from an unequivocal entity in space and time to redundant shadows exiled from space and time.[3]

From the Palestinian perspective, the al-Aqsa Intifada has turned into a Palestinian war for independence. In the nationalist reading of Mahmud Darwish, this new round of armed conflict between Israel and the Palestinians expresses the emanation of the national will of the Palestinian people to transform their unbroken national identity into the political reality of an independent Palestinian state. In line with the central claims of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European nationalists, Palestinian leaders demand the final convergence of state, nation, and society (cf. Hobsbawm, 1983b: 265). Not surprisingly, they also present the Palestinian nation as an unchangeable entity in time and space that is related to a particular territory. Yet academic reasoning deconstructs this nationalist rhetoric of a given transcendent and points at the historicity of both processes, state formation and nation building.[4] To be sure, the constructed nature of nations does not mean that they are not real. When this essay poses the question of how the Palestinian nation has been shaped by global and regional developments, it does not intend to question the reality or legitimacy of nationalist sentiments amongst the Palestinians. On the contrary, in arguing against the prejudice of Middle Eastern irrationality, this essay supports Palestinian demands for the international recognition of their right of self-determination alongside the Israeli state. It argues that precisely this demand is an expression of the hitherto denied international paternity of the Palestine conflict. What does this international paternity look like?

From a historical perspective, the formation of the Palestine conflict has been inextricably bound with two other processes. In the first place, the political history of Palestine has been shaped to a large extent by the emergence of the international system as a "society of states." Particularly with regard to the still state-centered character of the international order, the foundation of a Palestinian nation-state seems to be a late but necessary adaptation to the rules of the international game. Second, the Palestine conflict has been an integral part

of regional nation building, conditioning both the development of regional interstate relations and the evolution of actors and ideologies in Arab politics (cf. Sela, 1998). In this regional dimension, the Palestinian–Israeli relationship will maintain its crucial role as a "continuous theme in Arab politics" (Kazziha, 1990: 300), and without a sovereign Palestinian state, the Middle Eastern state system cannot be considered consolidated. In the light of the above-mentioned historical processes, the assumed irrationality of Middle Eastern politics is inseparably knitted into the logic of international politics, and the Palestinian nation has been shaped as one part of this complex interplay among international and regional forces.

In order to analyze the international paternity of the Palestine conflict, first a general theoretical framework concerning the linkage between nation building, state formation, and violent conflicts will be presented. These theoretical assumptions rest on some considerations of International Relations (IR) theory and of historical sociology, thus combining external and internal aspects of state-building processes. The third section then examines the evolution of the Palestine conflict and its territorial political coordinates against the background of historical changes in the international system. It further presents four analytical dimensions of the conflict that help us to better understand how local, regional, and global aspects of the conflict are interrelated. The fourth section examines ideological and institutional aspects of Palestinian nationalism through the lenses of global conditions and global constraints. Thereby, the social dynamics of Israeli–Palestinian relations are also taken into account.

Nation Building, State Formation, and War

The Nation-State in IR Theory and Political Sociology[5]

In his analogy of "war making and state making as organized crime" Charles Tilly struck the heart of the relation between European state formation and war in concluding that wars make states and states make war (Tilly, 1985). Although based on the historical experience of Europe, Tilly's conclusion seems also relevant regarding the violent nature of state-building processes in the Third World. There, more than 196 wars since 1945 have accompanied the processes of decolonization and state formation, processes that turned out to be particularly belligerent in the Middle East, in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in South and Southeast Asia (Jung and Schlichte, 1999: 38). In this regard, the

Third World has seemingly repeated the violent irrationality of European state formation, although the various paths that Third World countries have taken toward modern statehood differ substantially from the European experience. For a better understanding of contemporary state-building processes, however, this does not exclude the applicability of some general analytical concepts that are derived from European history.

This applies in particular to the role of nationalist movements in forming the contemporary political landscape of a global society of states. Nationalism has been one of the most successful export products of European political history. From its inception during the nineteenth century, the idea of the identity of nation and state, that political legitimacy must be based on the will of the nation (Schieder, 1991: 17–18), has spread over the entire globe. Nationalism as the ideology to bring about this political identity "feeds on cultural differences," turning them "into a principle of political loyalty and social identity." In this way, nationalist programs pick up localized, life-transmitted folk cultures and transform them into a standardized, education-transmitted culture (Gellner, 1995: 2–3). Thus, nation building is both the construction of homogenous cultural entities, and the politicization of these entities elevating the national political duty to an obligation that "overrides all other public obligations" (Hobsbawm, 1990: 9).

From a functionalist perspective, this cultural coding through nationalist constructions and "invented traditions" basically serves three purposes. In the first place, it establishes a symbolic representation of social cohesion and membership of a particular community. Second, it legitimizes the political institutions and authority structures of modern states. Finally, nationalist coding is instrumental in changing the social fabric of individuals via institutions of socialization. These spread and inculcate beliefs, value systems, and conventions of behavior (Hobsbawm, 1983a: 9). In transforming folk to national cultures, the invention of national print-languages was "of central ideological and political importance" (Anderson, 1983: 67). In processes of state formation, the formalization, scriptualization, and centralization of knowledge are conditions for the establishment and monopolization of an abstract knowledge to administer and therefore to rule. "Surveillance as the mobilizing of administrative power—through storage and control of information—" rests on the standardization, formalization, and implementation of a written language by the state (Giddens, 1992: 181). It is therefore no coincidence that the scientific development of comparative language studies went parallel to the formation of European nation-states (Anderson, 1983: 70).

Summing up this brief theoretical view of nationalism, the crucial point concerning the construction of nations lies in the congruence of the political and cultural unit. From this perspective, nationalism is an intrinsically political phenomenon, rather than becoming political, as John Hall put it (Hall, 1995: 23). The specific core of nationalist ideologies is their general political character and their relatedness to the formation of modern states.

Clearly, theorizing about nationalism and nation building revolves around the social institution of the modern state. Therefore, we first have to give a brief definition of our conceptual understanding of the state. There are basically two perspectives from which this definition can be made: from an external or an internal point of view. Externally, the state can be defined as the principal actor and the core institution of the international system. From this IR-theory perspective, states are autonomous entities, which pursue interests such as security, economic gain, or ideological goals on rational cost/benefit calculations (Gilpin, 1981: 11–13). Together they form an international system in which political authority rests on autonomy and territories within which "domestic political authorities are the only arbiters of legitimate behavior" (Krasner, 1995: 119). This is illustrated in the framework of the so-called Westphalian model of the international system in which states are rational actors "striving to maximize their utility in the face of constraints that emanate from an anarchic although interdependent international environment" (Krasner, 1995: 122). According to the distribution of power among these states, the international system has historically formed three types of international relations: imperial/hegemonic, bipolar, or balance of power systems (Gilpin, 1981: 29). War is then the result of the rationally calculated action of a state or a group of states that expects benefits from taking action toward systemic change.

While classical IR theory defines the state as a unitary actor pursuing its interests among other states, sociological theory tends to conceptualize the state from within as a particular political and social order. According to Max Weber, the modern state is a political community "that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Weber, 1991: 78). Political power is based on legal authority with a formal order subject to change by legislation (Weber, 1968a: 56). In spite of the fact that both theoretical approaches share key elements in defining a state, such as the monopoly of physical force and territoriality, processes of state formation are looked upon in different ways. Whereas IR theory is interested in state formation from an external, international system perspective,

political sociology concentrates on the unit level and therefore on internal mechanisms behind the monopolization of legitimate violence by the state as a political–territorial association (cf. Weber, 1968b: 904–05).

Parallel to the monopolization of the legitimate use of physical force, the modern state has acquired the monopoly on taxation and established a political order that rests on legal authority. In Weber's terms, "legal [rational] authority is resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" (Weber, 1968a: 215). Unlike traditional rule, which is based on personal authority and the obedience to age-old rules, legal systems of domination rest on an impersonal purpose and the obedience to abstract norms. Accordingly, state formation means both the expropriation of all autonomous actors who formerly controlled the means of physical force by the state and the transformation from traditional political orders to legal rule, that is from the personal authority of rulers to legal political authority based on formal regulations.

In the European example, the establishment of legal authority can be observed in a process of four waves of "juridification." First, the Absolutist State signified the formation of the state monopolies of taxation and physical force, which, second, became legally anchored in political institutions and civil law in the constitutional monarchies. The emergence of the democratic constitutional state marked the third wave, in which bourgeois revolutions brought about the nationalization of the two state monopolies, thus breaking absolutist power. Finally, the formation of the welfare state tamed the autonomous dynamics that spring from the accumulative logic of the economic system and its generalized medium, money. It was not before the very end of this process lasting many centuries that representational forms of government, democratic procedures, and formal norms had been firmly established (Habermas, 1986: 356 ff.). Yet, Norbert Elias reminds us that these processes of internal pacification and the establishment of democratic rule were not at all peaceful developments. He traced the origin of the state monopoly of physical force back to its opposite, the unrestricted and violent elimination contest in which any individual or small group struggles against many others for sources not yet monopolized (Elias, 1994: 351).

Putting IR and sociological perspectives together, state formation is a contradictory process in which the state appears as a cause for both war and peace. The internal pacification of social conflicts and the evolution of a "society of states" that is built on Westphalian

principles such as territorial integrity, political sovereignty, and non-interference were interrelated, while violent processes contributed to the emergence of distinct realms of state and civil society (cf. Krause, 1996: 326). Based on the civil claims of protection (security) and the state's need for extraction (taxation), European state formation has taken a contradictory trajectory. This contradiction is manifested in the "central paradox . . . that the pursuit of war and military capacity, after having created national states as a sort of by-product, led to a civilianization of government and domestic politics" (Tilly, 1990: 206). Regardless of the particular ways in which the bargain between war-makers and state-makers brought about the "civilized" standards of international law and democratic rule, these standards are the normative constraints under which current processes of state formation take place. Concerning the Palestine conflict, we can therefore follow Tilly who concluded: "Israel's territorial wars with its neighbors would have surprised no European of the eighteenth century, but in the period since 1945, they have become anomalies" (Tilly, 1990: 181).

Conditions and Constraints of Middle Eastern State Formation

Not only have Israel's territorial ambitions been constrained, but also—and even more severely—those of other state-makers in the Middle East. Referring to Middle Eastern state formation, Ian Lustick (1997) explained "the absence of Middle Eastern great powers" with the normative and power-related constraints that were imposed on regional state formation by an existing international order. Under the impact of international norms and great-power policies, Middle Eastern state-makers were not able to fight those large-scale state-building wars as their European predecessors did. Being from its inception dominated by the larger unit of the Western state system, the Middle Eastern system was not allowed to operate by the same rules (Lustick, 1995: 655–63). In this way, the concepts of "free competition" or "anarchy," that is the absence of any superordinated authority, are only of limited explicative value in understanding the evolution and shape of the Middle Eastern state system. In pursuing their interests, the political entrepreneurs of the Middle East have had to conform their actions to the already existing norms and power relations of a hegemonic international system.

Analyzing the historical background of the Ottoman Empire's decline, Carl Brown (1984) derived characteristic patterns in the close

interaction between the emerging Middle Eastern and the international system of states. He called this organizing and explanatory device the "Eastern Question System." According to Brown, the intense interrelationships between the unequal power systems led to a center–periphery struggle in which domestic and international politics became thoroughly blended and confused (Brown, 1984: 72). On the one hand, the Middle East provided European powers with a convenient arena in which to fight out their rivalries with little risk, while on the other hand, regional and local forces were able to instrumentalize great-power politics to their own ends. This entire confusion of international, regional, and local levels is then expressed in the systemic characteristic that no outside state has been able to dominate and organize the Middle East, just as no state from within has been able to do so (Brown, 1984: 270–74). With regard to the Arab–Israeli conflict, this systemic characteristic is reflected in the fact that all Arab–Israeli confrontations have been stopped by international diplomatic intervention, yet so far outside intervention has not been able to bring about real peace (Brown, 1984: 241).

One aspect of the Eastern Question System is that it shaped to a large extent the existing territorial political landscape of the Middle East. The boundaries of Middle Eastern states reflect compromises of both the interests of international great powers and the assertions of regional actors. More closely linked to the internal dimensions of state formation is another crucial difference between the Middle Eastern and the European examples. The competitive nature of European state formation resulted in a concept of security that was predominantly externally oriented. This stress on external security permitted a strong identification of state security with the security of its citizens and thus a high legitimacy of state rule (Krause, 1996: 320). The overlapping notion of security together with the bargaining processes between military men and entrepreneurs resulted in the subsequent subordination of the military to the civilian state elite (Krause, 1996: 325), and it contributed heavily to the convergence of nation, state, and society. The two steps of juridification that lead from absolutism to constitutionally based democracy reflect the historical development of this specific civil–military relationship. The authoritarian nature of Middle Eastern politics has its origin not least in the fact that as political and economic rent-seekers, Middle Eastern regimes have been able to extract their material needs from international resources. Bargaining processes between the military and civil society comparable to the European experience and the convergence of state and society, thus, have been essentially hampered.

Territory and Armed Conflict: Palestine in the Context of International Developments

Emergence and Institutionalization of the Palestine Question

The origin of the Palestine conflict can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when the first Zionist settlements were established in the then Ottoman province of Beirut and the *sanjak* (district) of Jerusalem (Sayigh, 1997: 5). The complex interplay of historical processes in Europe and the Middle East provided the background for the genesis of the conflict. In combination with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, the aggravation of the imperialist power struggle offered Zionist and Arab nationalist movements the opportunity to pursue their interests in alliance with one of the great powers. In applying the nationalist discourse of the time, non-state actors claimed their right to the establishment of their own states based on the principles of the Westphalian order. In this regard, the still virulent anti-Semitism in Europe was instrumental in the justification of Jewish nationalism. The title of Leo Pinsker's book *Auto-Emancipation* (1882) became a keyword for the Zionist movement. The Zionist ideology opposed the principle of emancipation through assimilation that had so far prevailed among Europe's Jewry. On the occasion of the first Zionist World Congress (1897), Theodor Herzl brought this critique against the liberal societies of Western Europe to the programmatic conclusion that the national liberation of the Jews could only be accomplished by the establishment of a Jewish nation-state (Schölch, 1981: 39–40).

The chance to transform their national aspirations into action came for both Zionists and Arab nationalists with the breakdown of the international balance of power system in the First World War followed by the political reorganization of the international system at Versailles:

> Given the official commitment of the victorious powers to Wilsonian nationalism, it was natural that anyone claiming to speak in the name of some oppressed or unrecognized people—and they lobbied the supreme peacemakers in large numbers—should do so in terms of the national principle, and especially the right of self-determination. (Hobsbawm, 1990: 136)

It was in the language of the colonizers that the colonized now began to pursue their political emancipation. The territorial distribution of

the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire at San Remo (1920) resembled the power relations among the asymmetrical elements of the Eastern Question System.[6] Dominated by the interests of the colonial powers Great Britain and France, the political aspirations of some less powerful regional actors are nevertheless clearly visible in the territorial delineation of the mandate territories. Particularly the division between the newly established territories of Palestine and Transjordan was a clear expression of Britain's wartime commitments (cf. Gil-Har, 2000). In this respect, the strategic interests of the British government rather than causing sympathy for the Zionist idea led to the inception of Palestine as a political entity in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Vereté, 1970: 64).

Two aspects of the mandate period were particularly crucial for Middle Eastern state formation:

(1) The ordering principle of territoriality was introduced and sanctified, creating among others a—in territorial terms—clearly demarcated political entity of Palestine under British mandate for the first time. The mandate constituted "'Palestine' as a geographic, economic, social, and political entity distinct from the surrounding lands and peoples" (Kimmerling, 2001: 30).
(2) With regard to the internal aspects of state formation, modern administrative, and military structures, which had first been introduced by the Ottoman reforms,[7] were enhanced and monopolies of physical force more firmly established.

Although characterized by restricted sovereignty and deprived of political independence, the mandate period introduced the political matrix of the international order to the region, and, consequently, shaped both the territorial structure of the Middle Eastern state system and the coordinates of the Palestine conflict. The Zionist movement now had the opportunity to put its ideas into practice by increasingly colonizing the British mandate of Palestine and establishing a state-like institutional structure.[8] Yet the mass immigration of European Jews to Palestine did not happen until the German Nazi regime began its policy of extermination against the Jews. From 1933 to 1935, for instance, approximately 135,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine (Flores, 1981: 112), more than in the 15 years since the end of the First World War (Eisenstadt, 1987: 434). Regarding inter-Arab politics, the 1930s were also the period in which the systemic structures of regional interstate relations were implemented. Revolving around themes such as the "Arab Caliphate," the Hashemite–Saudi

Conflict, the Syrian Kingdom, and the Palestine question, the characteristic patterns of unity and disunity among Arab states were institutionalized. In this struggle for regional hegemony amongst Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Transjordan, the political claims of Palestine's Arab population and its resistance to Zionism became hostage to the subordinated interests of Arab rulers, whose preferences were to "prevent any single Arab country from attaining a foothold in Palestine" (Podeh, 1998: 67).

Whereas the multipolar structure of the international system facilitated the transformation of the former Ottoman territories into a Middle Eastern state system, it was within the coordinates of bipolarity that the consolidation of the regional state system took place. Beginning with President Truman's prompt recognition of the Israeli state in May 1948, Cold War considerations and public perceptions of the East–West conflict determined U.S. post–Second World War policy in Palestine (cf. Evensen, 1992). In the region, however, the Palestine conflict was almost entirely articulated in pan-Arab terms, and the conflict became "a rallying point for internal solidarity in many Arab societies" (Kazziha, 1990: 318). Generally speaking, four crucial developments can be observed in the Cold War period:

(1) In the first place, a regional system of great-power clientelism emerged in which Israel and the Arab states acted as political rent-seekers on the international level while pursuing relatively independent regional goals.
(2) Within this clientelistic arrangement, regional and international confrontations became blurred, tying the Palestine conflict tightly together with the East–West conflict.
(3) This identification of international with regional perspectives facilitated the extreme militarization of Middle Eastern states, whose regimes used the thus-acquired means of force to both stabilize their authoritarian rule and fight limited regional wars. The Palestine conflict in particular escalated into a series of interstate wars, which further enhanced its interrelatedness with internal and external aspects of regional state formation.
(4) It was, then, the poor military performance of Arab regimes in these wars against Israel that contributed decisively to the fourth development, the reemergence of the Palestinians, during the Cold War period. Beginning with the humiliating Arab defeat in the Six-Day War (1967), the PLO increasingly had taken the initiative and developed into the organizational core of a specifically Palestinian national movement. The articulation of the Palestine

conflict shifted from a pan-Arab to a Palestinian nationalist discourse, demanding the establishment of a Palestinian nation-state.[9]

Four Analytical Dimensions of the Palestine Conflict

From the first Zionist settlements in the nineteenth century to the major military confrontation between the PLO and the Israeli army during the latter's intervention in Lebanon (1982), the Palestine conflict has developed in complex interrelation with regional and international political structures. From an analytical point of view, this complex interrelation falls into four dimensions of conflict:

(1) The *Israeli–Palestinian dimension*, which comprises the relation between the Israeli state and the Palestinians who live either in Israel itself, in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or as refugees and expatriates outside Palestine. The Israeli–Palestinian dimension is of a territorial and political demographic nature. At the center of the territorial aspect stand Palestinian claims based on UN Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948. They comprise the right to their homeland, the right of return for the exiled population, and the right of self-determination, that is to establish an independent Palestinian state. The demographic aspect is a result of the explicitly Jewish character of the Israeli state, which seems to be incompatible with the Palestinian right of return.

(2) The *Israeli–Arab dimension* reflects the complicated relationship between Israel and the Arab states. In the first place, there are issues such as military security, border demarcation, water distribution, and territories under Israeli occupation that have shaped the relations between Israel and its direct neighbors, the so-called confrontation states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. In the second place, there is the ideological aspect of the Israeli–Arab conflict dimension that rests on pan-Arab claims to the whole of Palestine. This ideological aspect affects the political legitimacy of all Arab regimes. The—albeit often rather rhetorical—support for the Palestinian case has therefore been an important variable for both the internal political stability of Arab states and the quest for leadership amongst them.

(3) The *Jewish–Islamic dimension* of the conflict has an impact on the relationship between Israel and the Islamic world. From an Islamic point of view, the territory of the Israeli state is an integral

part of the *dar al-Islam*, the lands belonging to the Islamic community. The very existence of a specifically Jewish state within the *dar al-Islam* poses a permanent challenge to the ideal of Islamic supremacy. Furthermore, ranking behind Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem represents the third most important place among the holy cities of Islam. Thus the fact of "Jewish rule on Islamic territory" and the issue of Jerusalem make the Palestinian question also an Islamic one.[10]

(4) The *colonial/Western dimension* of the conflict, which is a result of the historical trajectory that the formation of the Israeli state has taken. Given the involvement of the colonial powers in Middle Eastern state formation and Western assistance to the Zionist movement, it comes as no surprise that the Arab world perceives Israel as an "outpost and symbol of Western imperialism," a perception that has been further strengthened by the almost unconditional support that the United States has granted to Israel since the 1960s. The historically constructed notion of Western conspiracy against the Arab world has been further enhanced by the high standards in the fields of technology, education, and economy, which distinguish Israeli society decisively from its Arab neighbors.

In reality, however, these four dimensions of the Palestine conflict are almost inseparably knitted together. The analytical distinction presented here serves as a heuristic instrument in order to understand better the complex conflict structures and how they interrelate with the formation of Palestinian nationalism.

With regard to analytical purposes, it makes sense to further distinguish between conflicts of interest and conflicts of ideas. Whereas territorial and security issues of the Israeli–Palestinian and the Israeli–Arab dimensions, as well as matters concerning the repatriation and recompensation of Palestinian refugees, are primarily conflicts of interests, which principally can be solved by negotiation, the conflicts of ideas that characterize the Israeli–Arab, Jewish–Islamic, and colonial/Western dimensions are more difficult to overcome. As integral parts of the political worldview, the pan-Arab and Islamic claims to Palestine, as well as the conviction that Israel is an unacceptable relict of colonial domination, are not subject to negotiation. Although a fair solution to the above-mentioned conflicts of interests might have an impact on this worldview, a change in perception takes time. The ideational components of the Palestine conflict will therefore even survive the foundation of an independent Palestinian state.

Given the violent history of the Palestine conflict, ideological aspects of the Palestine question are instrumental in securitizing other domestic and regional conflicts that occur in the ongoing process of regional state formation. Theoretically, securitization is an extreme version of politicization, and it presents an issue as an existential threat. To securitize an issue is a move to requiring emergency measures and the application of extraordinary means (Buzan et al., 1998: 23–26). In this way, both Israel and the Arab states have highly securitized regional politics. In the Israeli case, regional conflicts and the country's own state of security have been viewed against the background of the Holocaust, turning Israel into a "fortress state" and leading to two preventive wars (Suez War, 1956; and the Six-Day War, 1967).[11] Arab regimes have also used the ideological dimension of the Palestine conflict to justify the use of military force against both internal and external threats. Moreover, the ideological dimension of the Palestine conflict plays a major role in the strategies of Islamist movements in legitimizing the application of violent means in their political strife. In the run-up to the Second Gulf War (1991), this overlapping of interests and ideas in Middle Eastern conflicts was clearly visible.

The End of the Cold War and the Beginning of the Oslo Process

After Iraqi troops had occupied Kuwait in August 1990, Iraq's President Saddam Hussain linked the question of an Iraqi withdrawal with the solution of the Palestine conflict. While the West strongly rejected this package deal, it was almost enthusiastically received among the population of Arab states. Pursuing his own power interests, Saddam Hussain used the Palestine conflict as the classical rallying point for inter-Arab solidarity. He combined the four dimensions of the conflict with his own interests and was thus able to stir a major legitimacy crisis for many Arab regimes that supported international demands for an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Although Saddam Hussain's attempt to draw the entire region into a disastrous war eventually failed, the Palestine conflict was again on the international agenda. The structural context for the explanation of both the Second Gulf War and the subsequently initiated Middle East peace process are to be found in the decisive changes in the international system that occurred with the end of the Cold War.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the post-1945 clientelistic arrangement between the bipolar international and the regional state

systems broke down. The end of the East–West conflict deprived the regional states of a major source of military and economic means. The peace process was therefore not so much a result of major structural changes in the Palestine conflict itself, but the outcome of a process of adjustment to the new international conditions by the regional players (cf. Beck, 1997b). In this way, the shift from the bipolar international system to U.S. hegemony was reflected in the mere fact "that each party's decision to participate in the negotiations emerged largely from its calculations about its relationship to the United States" (Kelman, 1992: 20).[12] The West in general and the United States in particular were now the only sources of economic rents left. Accordingly, joining the peace process was the appropriate move to guarantee the continuous influx of politically motivated economic resources. A brief glance at the Israeli and Palestinian examples shows how this shift to a new version of the Eastern Question System functioned.

Considering the Israeli position in the early 1990s, a statement of the former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Robert Neumann, is telling:

> The collapse of the Soviet Union has substantially diminished Israel's possible role as a strategic asset. To be sure, other conflicts in the Middle East loom, but, as the Gulf War of 1991 demonstrated, in such conflagrations Israel is a potential hindrance rather than an asset. (1992: 49)

The political and economic dependency of the Israeli state on U.S. support, exceeding an annual amount of US$3 billion (Paulsen, 1999: 11), left then Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir no other choice than to sit down at the U.S.-sponsored negotiation table. Shamir's strategy to delay any agreements as long as possible, while creating a *fait accompli* in expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, was partly countered by U.S. pressure. The coupling of a US$10 billion loan guarantee for the integration of Russian Jewish migrants with the settlement policy of the Israeli government stressed the determination of the Bush administration to take steps toward resolving the Palestine conflict and contributed to the victory of Yitzhak Rabin's Labor Party in the 1992 Israeli general elections (Telhami, 1999: 386).

In the immediate aftermath of the Second Gulf War, the Palestinians were certainly in the weakest position. The "strategic mistake" of the PLO of associating itself with Saddam Hussain under the impact of the new international order brought the organization

to the brink of economic collapse.[13] For decades, the Palestinian communities in the Gulf States had, to a large extent, secured the funding of the PLO. The Kuwaiti government, for example, collected a "liberation tax" among Palestinian employees (al-Husseini, 2000: 55). The Second Gulf War and the subsequent expulsion of more than 250,000 Palestinians from Kuwait suddenly deprived not only the PLO of major financial resources, but also many refugee families who relied on the remittances of their relatives of this source of income (Beck, 1997a: 639). Given its full dependency on political rents and the rising political assertions of the population in the occupied territories, the PLO leadership in Tunis had no other choice but to join the peace process under initially unfavorable conditions. Since the Oslo agreements, however, international assistance of US$2.5 billion for the period 1994–1998 has granted a large "peace dividend" to the Palestinian authority under Arafat (Brynen, 1996: 79).

Against the background of international change, the conclusion that "peace was made out of necessity" seems evident (Maddy-Weitzmann, 2000: 44). Triggered by the end of bipolarity, the peace process can be interpreted as the rational adaptation of regional states to the conditions of a new international system. Viewed through the prism of international structures, three major steps in the evolution of both the Palestine conflict and the Middle Eastern state system find their explanation in close relation to international change:

(1) The creation of Palestine as a political entity and the transfer of the territorial principle occurred together with the breakdown of the multipolar order. The fact that both Zionists and Arab nationalists associated themselves with Britain laid the foundation stone for the so-called two-state solution of the Palestine question, which during the mandate period sporadically escalated into armed clashes—the major one being the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939—that were confined by limited sovereignty.
(2) In the context of decolonization and superpower confrontation, the territorial political structures of the mandate period were put into the international legal framework of the Westphalian system. Accordingly, the Palestine question appeared as an Arab–Israeli state conflict fought out in the classical form of interstate warfare, both escalated and limited by the conditions and constraints that the international system provided the regional actors.
(3) Finally, the end of the Cold War offered an opportunity for negotiations. Under the new hegemonic order, the internationally dependent regional states and the PLO had to adjust to the new

rules of the game that the United States dictated. The Oslo process and the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO subsequently completed the return to the Palestinian–Israeli core conflict, a historical process that began in the 1960s.

Ideologies and Institutions: Palestine on the Road to Independence

Palestinian Nationalism and Its Competitors

The previous section underlined that an international perspective is salient in understanding both the emergence of Palestine as a political territory and the ways in which the conflict about this territory has been fought out. In particular the successful launching of a negotiation process after the Second Gulf War, bringing the Arab states, Israel, and the Palestinians together for the first time, was to a large extent due to international factors. Yet to analyze the Palestinian road to political independence, it is equally important to sketch out how the formation of Palestinian nationalism has been conditioned by a set of historical, cultural, and social factors, as well as by competing pan-Arab and pan-Islamic ideologies.

A decisive determinant of both Israeli and Palestinian nationalism is the collective traumata the two communities have faced: the Jewish people as target of European anti-Semitism and later as victim of the *shoa*, the genocide perpetrated by the German Nazi regime against the Jews; and the Palestinians as victims of *al-nakba* (the catastrophe), the expulsion from their homeland in 1948/1949. The latter has accorded the "right of return" a central role in Palestinian national consciousness. These historical legacies have deeply molded the worldview of both peoples, thus causing them to view the conflict between them as a struggle for survival in which compromises necessarily lead to defeat (Gaede, 1992: 221). Consequently, the conflict structure has become an inextricable part of the national ideologies of both sides, so that they perceive their relationship in essentialist terms, basically as a zero-sum game.

However, it would be wrong to consider Palestinian nationalism as an ephemeral ideology that basically developed as a kind of natural reflex in response to Zionism and the experience of *al-nakba*. Similar to their Zionist adversaries, Palestinian nationalists were able to draw on various aspects of the historical, political, and cultural heritage of their community. In territorial terms, for instance, the British mandate of Palestine was not in its entirety without a predecessor.

Although administratively fragmented into the Ottoman *sanjak*'s of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Akka (Reinkowski, 1995: 9), the notion of Palestine as an integrated territory had been developing amongst its population since the 1830s (Schölch, 1986: 23). From this territorial perspective, a particular Palestinian identity, centered on the autonomous status of Jerusalem, was already emerging under Ottoman rule (Kimmerling and Migdal, 1993: 69). Yet social cohesion and community membership were still strongly related to religion, tribe, family, and locality. In this early stage of a rising Palestinian identity, people had "multiple loyalties to their religion, the Ottoman state, the Arabic language, and the emerging identity of Arabism" (Khalidi, 1997: 6). While at the end of the First World War patterns of a distinct Palestinian identity existed, the specifically nationalist congruence of a Palestinian identity in cultural and political terms was still in its infancy.[14] Consequently, the political resistance during the mandate period was essentially hampered by traditional forms of political factionalism among notable families and the competition of pan-Arab, Arab–Islamic, and Palestinian ideologies (Diner, 1982: 61).

It was the Arab defeat in the Arab–Israeli war of 1948/1949 that initiated an important political transformation toward legal political authority in which new radical political forces with a middle-class background took power. In becoming increasingly involved "in a process of outbidding each other over the Palestine question" (Kazziha, 1990: 303), these regimes temporarily eclipsed the nascent Palestinian nationalism by pan-Arabism.[15] The Arab monarchies, which were dependent on the colonial powers, along with the notable leaders in Palestine, had proven their inability to support the Palestinian course. From now on, Arab nationalist parties such as the Nasserists in Egypt and the two branches of the Baath Party in Syria and Iraq combined social revolutionary ideas with the decolonization of the Middle East and the Palestine question. Their perspective, the "alliance of Zionism and colonialism" and therefore "Israel's imperialist image," was seemingly confirmed by the second Arab–Israeli war, which began with a joint military assault of Israel, Britain, and France against Egypt. The Suez War (1956) facilitated the rise of Egypt's President Nasser as the almost undisputed champion of Arab nationalism, who engaged in a dangerous rhetorical war against Israel. The Six-Day War (1967), then, marked the beginning of the end of pan-Arab radicalism. The humiliating Arab defeat and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza shattered the high expectations that the radical rhetoric of the pan-Arab discourse had raised. Since then,

the Arab regimes have gradually shifted their political orientation toward the West and introduced policies of economic liberalization,[16] leaving behind radical political approaches to Islamist movements whose ideologies also seem to be the last remaining competitors to Palestinian nationalism.

Islamist movements in the Arab world have heavily capitalized on the ideological power that the Israeli–Arab and the Jewish–Islamic dimensions of the Palestine conflict offer.[17] Various militant Islamist groups in Egypt, for instance, equate their struggle against Egypt's authoritarian state elite with the Arab–Israeli confrontation. Another example is the "Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine," Hamas. In line with the analytical distinction of the Palestine conflict previously mentioned, Hamas delineates its anti-Zionist struggle into a Palestinian, an Arab, and a Muslim sphere. In its manifesto, Hamas opposes the idea of a secular Palestinian state and reminds the Arab and Muslim people that it is a personal duty for all Muslims to fight against Israel (Azzam, 1990: 130–46). Yet, behind the pan-Islamic rhetoric of organizations such as Hamas and Jihad, it is increasingly the Palestinian sphere and the nationalist demand for an independent state that comes to the fore. Moreover, although the Jewish–Islamic dimension can serve as an ideological platform to undermine any kind of peaceful settlement with Israel, concluding peace is nevertheless possible from an Islamic point of view. It is not a matter of substance, but a matter of interpretation. This was demonstrated in a legal ruling (*fatwa*) of the highest legal body in Sunni Islam, the Egyptian *Al-Azhar*, in which the treaty of Camp David, and thus peace with Israel, was approved as in the interest of the Muslim people (Hartert, 1982).

Since late Ottoman times, Palestinian nationalism has been shaped within the political and legal coordinates of the international system that largely defined its territorial components. In this context, two forces were decisive in transforming the traditional rootedness of Palestinian peasant society with the land, the religion, and its folk culture into a nationalist culture. On the one hand, there was the encounter with the Zionist settler movement and the subsequent formation of the Israeli state. From the first Palestinian attacks on early Jewish settlements, through rural resistance and urban opposition to Zionism during the British mandate (Khalidi, 1997: 115), until the establishment of the PLO, the contours of Palestinian nationalism have been formed in the struggle against Zionism. In this century-long process, the Palestinians developed their national consciousness explicitly in confrontation with the nationalist formation of the Israeli state. On the other hand, Palestinian nationalism evolved first within

the dominant political streams of Arabism and Islamic modernism. As a specific nationalist ideology, Palestinian nationalism had to emancipate itself from competing and overlapping loyalties to pan-Arab and pan-Islamic ideologies. It therefore developed not only against an emerging state, Israel, but also in the emancipation from and the integration of previously superordinated ideologies of regional state formation. Moreover, the previously discussed analytical structure of the conflict, that is its Israeli–Palestinian, Israeli–Arab, Jewish–Islamic, and colonial/Western dimensions, became an integral part of Palestinian nationalism. The following section briefly discusses the impact of this complex process of transformation, confrontation, emancipation, and integration on Palestinian institution building.

Colonialism, Exile, and Occupation: The Social Conditions of Palestinian Institution Building

The institutional constant of the conflict can be found in a structural asymmetry concerning the organizational levels in the formation of Israeli and Palestinian political and economic institutions. Already during the mandate period, the Zionist movement had a clear programmatic strategy, and, with the Zionist World Congress, the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut (trade union federation), and the paramilitary Haganah,[18] it had powerful political organizations at its disposal, which facilitated the Jewish colonization of Palestine. In addition, these institutions helped the Zionists to monopolize the modern economic sector of the mandate for the Jewish population. In this way, the social transformation of traditional Palestinian society was essentially hampered, and traditional forms of political factionalism severely limited the efficiency of Palestinian resistance (cf. Flores, 1981). This structural asymmetry also conditioned historical events after the United Nations presented a partition plan for Palestine in November 1947. Whereas the Zionists had already developed a state-like institutional structure that now could be merged with the assigned territory, the Arab response was based on a relatively diffuse rejection front tending to be motivated by the competing interests of Arab states rather than by the interests of the Arab population of Palestine.

In the course of the historical events, the Palestinians basically have been divided into three groups: Palestinians in exile, both refugees and expatriates; the populace of the West Bank and Gaza; and the Arab population of Israel. The Palestinian refugee problem began

with the first Arab–Israeli war (1948/1949) in which more than 700,000 Palestinians fled from their homes (Flores, 1984: 384).[19] During the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in the Six-Day War of 1967, another 300,000 persons were displaced (Shiblak, 1996: 40). According to current estimations, the number of Palestinians in exile is in the range of 4–4.5 million people (Smith, 1999: 25), thus by far exceeding the population of the occupied territories. More than half of them are registered as refugees by the UNRWA (Brynen, 1997: 49), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. The UNRWA was created in December 1949, and since then it has been providing the refugees with state-like services in the fields of education, health care, and social services (al-Husseini, 2000: 51). In the situation of exile and statelessness, the UNRWA, although an international organization, became an essential pillar of Palestinian nation building. Given its prominent role in the sector of education, the UNRWA has played an institutional role of national socialization and represents therefore a major aspect of the international paternity of Palestinian nationalism.[20]

While the envisaged proclamation of a Palestinian state would reconcile political sovereignty and home for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, the simultaneous acceptance of the Israeli state deprives many of the expatriates of their right of return. In particular the 330,000 registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who constitute a politically, economically, and socially marginalized group without any recognized place in Lebanon's sectarian system, have been bypassed in the Oslo process. Originating from Galilee and coastal areas, they have no chance of returning, while at the same time their settlement in Lebanon is heavily opposed (Sayigh, 1995). One can imagine that, under these conditions, the transformation of the nationally ingrained right of return into compensation and resettlement schemes is all but an easy task. On the one hand, the refugee camps are still perceived as symbols of the right of return, and generations of refugees have grown up with ideal narratives about the return to their Palestinian homes (al-Husseini, 2000: 60). This particular situation is a result of both the strong attachment of Palestinian refugees to their "village, farm and social environment" (Tibawi, 1963: 509) and the fact that upholding the refugee status was for decades a major political tool of Arab regimes in their policies of nonacceptance of the Israeli right of existence.[21] On the other hand, a Palestinian state could indeed solve some of the political–administrative problems and civil rights restrictions most of the refugees have been confronted with for decades.[22] Although not living in the Palestinian state, they could be under the

administrative protection of its sovereign authority. This ambivalent effect of the peace process is reflected in the resentment that the majority of the refugees, in contrast to the population of the West Bank, had against the Oslo agreements (cf. Smith, 1999: 26; Mi'ari, 1999).

The difficulties in solving the refugee question are closely linked to the history of the second pillar of Palestinian national institution building, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Set up under the tutelage of the Arab League in 1964, the PLO became an umbrella body for a multiplicity of Palestinian organizations. Many of them, students', workers', womens', and teachers' unions, as well as the later dominant commando organizations such as the Fatah of Yasir Arafat or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) founded by George Habash, had been formed in the diaspora from the early 1950s onward.[23] At its first national congress in East Jerusalem (1964), the PLO adopted the Palestinian National Charter, calling for the establishment of a democratic and secular state on the territory of the former British mandate. On the occasion of the seventh summit of the Arab League in Rabat in 1974, more than 27 years since the release of the UN partition plan, the PLO was officially announced as the "sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," aiming at the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Yet as Palestinian nationalism had matured and liberated itself from Arab tutelage, there was no more territory left. On the contrary, in the same year of the Rabat summit, the Jewish settler movement, Gush Emunin ("Block of the Faithful"), began with the programmatic colonization of the occupied territories. Ironically, the PLO now faced a comparable situation to that with which the Zionists were confronted earlier in the twentieth century. With the Palestinian National Council, the Executive Committee, the Palestinian National Fund, and its various military organizations, the PLO had developed into a "state in exile" (Sayigh, 1997). Thus Palestinian state formation followed the "Zionist example," that is building state-like institutions without having a territory or enjoying political sovereignty.

The 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza had a tremendous impact on the internal evolution of both Israeli and Palestinian society. Indeed, besides the previously examined crucial role of changes in the international system, it was the societal developments in the aftermath of the Israeli occupation of the remaining territories of Palestine that prepared the social background against which the peace process was initiated. In 1977, the election victory of the Likud

Block marked a watershed in the political history of Israel. For the first time, the representatives of the revisionist Zionist wing replaced the so far dominant Labor Zionists in governing the country. The founding father of the Revisionists, Jabotinsky, demanded already in the 1930s the establishment of a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine. It was precisely this goal that the Likud prime ministers, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, pursued with their settlement policies. The Likud governments massively supported the settler movements, and the number of Jewish settlers in the occupied territories rose between 1977 and 1985 from 5,023 to 53,000 (Lustick, 1993: 11).[24]

The social changes of the 1970s and 1980s culminated in the Intifada, the uprising in the occupied territories that broke out in December 1987.[25] The Intifada symbolized two interrelated but nevertheless distinct developments: the erosion of consensus in Israeli society and the move of the political initiative from the Palestinians in exile to the Palestinian people of the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli army, so far involved in a series of interstate wars and guerilla attacks, was suddenly confronted with stone-throwing youths who brought the violent face of the conflict into the center of Israeli society. There and in the outside world, the Palestine conflict acquired an image of heavily armed Israeli soldiers fighting Palestinian civilians. But the uprising not only damaged Israel's public image worldwide, it also had heavy social and financial costs.[26] Eventually, the policy of the "iron fist," announced in 1985 by the then Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin, turned out to be a political and economic disaster for the country, putting the question of the occupied territories high on the agenda of both Israeli and world politics.

From a Palestinian perspective, the Intifada was, on the one hand, a response to 20 years of occupation, to being gradually deprived of their land by Jewish settlers, and to a deteriorating security situation under the daily experience of military force. It was estimated that until 1984 approximately 200,000 inhabitants of the West Bank, that is around 20 percent of its entire population, had been in Israeli prisons (Flores, 1989: 47). Under Israeli military administration, the rule of law was almost abolished, and people were frequently confronted with human rights abuses. On the other hand, the uprising was also an expression of the social crisis that affected the entire region. The socioeconomic transformation of the West Bank and Gaza even accelerated under Israeli occupation, and the structures of Palestine's traditional agricultural society eroded. On the eve of the Intifada, nearly 165,000 Palestinians were working in Israel under legally insecure

conditions (Samara, 2000: 22). In economic matters entirely dependent on Israel, the prospects for Palestinian youth were bleak. Taking into account that approximately 46 percent of the population in the occupied territories was under 14 years of age (Khalidi, 1988: 498), it did not come as a surprise that Palestinian youth and local grassroots organizations, not the established guerilla fighters, spearheaded the uprising. Both the PLO and the Islamic resistance movements[27] were at first taken by surprise, and it was the young Palestinian middle class that strove for political participation and demanded the foundation of a Palestinian state on the territory of the West Bank and Gaza.[28] What is crucial here is that the Intifada twisted the focus from the diaspora to the people in the occupied territories and it thereby "seriously undermined any claims neighboring Arab states may have had to the territories themselves or to tutelage over the Palestinian people" (Noble, 1991: 156). Most specifically, the uprising finally defined the territory on which a future Palestinian state should be erected.

The initiative from the occupied territories put massive pressure on the PLO leadership in Tunis, which was in danger of losing political control. In November 1988, at the session of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers, a majority of the representatives endorsed the new political program that linked the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories with the acceptance of the Israeli state. In this way, the Council meeting in Algiers marked the abrogation of the National Charter of 1964 and the final shift from "the mystique and rhetoric" of an armed struggle for the whole of Palestine toward a territorialism that was defined by the occupied territories (Tamari, 1991: 13). Although the Palestinians were, at the beginning of the peace process, only represented in Madrid in a joint Jordanian–Palestinian delegation, the PLO was able to consolidate its leadership behind the scenes. Moreover, it succeeded in integrating the societal network of the popular committees in the occupied territories that had organized the Intifada, thus merging the political structures of localities with the exile institutions in the overall framework of the PLO (Tamari, 1991: 25). Since the Oslo agreements in 1993, the PLO has officially retaken the political lead.

In sum, the establishment of the Palestinian authority in the Westbank and Gaza finally marks the convergence of the institutions and territory of a Palestinian state. The fact that this state is still deprived of political sovereignty seems to be in the continuity of the asymmetric character of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Yet this Palestinian state with suspended sovereignty has been built at the expense of a

decisive part of the Palestinian nation. During the entire peace process, the refugees have been marginalized and their interests have almost been neglected by the Palestinian authority (cf. Brynen, 1997). The only expatriates who have profited from the peace process seem to be the members of Arafat's Fatah movement. So far, the establishment of the Palestinian authority, and therefore the institutional building process of the Palestinian state, resembles an uneasy compromise between the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza and expatriates close to the PLO leadership and to Fatah (Brynen, 1996). In this respect the convergence of state, nation, and society has only partly been achieved.

Conclusions

The coordinates of the Palestine conflict have been shaped by the dynamics of the overlapping international and regional state systems. In this setting, the evolution of Palestinian nationalism took place in the context of internationally constrained competition among Arab states, and between them and Israel. Global conditions and global constraints led to a confusion of international, regional, and local influences on both the territorial formation of Palestine and the building of a Palestinian nation. Taking the role of UNRWA into account, Palestinian national consciousness was even partly constructed by an international organization providing the necessary civilian framework for a nation-building process that was in its political and military dimension conducted by the exile organization PLO. Given the state-centered international environment in which the Palestine conflict has been embedded, the foundation of an independent Palestinian state is the only logical end to any future peace process. Only lacking its formal approval, this Palestinian state has almost become a *fait accompli* (Inbar and Sandler, 1997: 23), and the Al-Aqsa Intifada could be interpreted as the violent struggle for the necessary international approval of Palestinian sovereignty. In this way, the Palestinian demand for international intervention could be understood as a call to acknowledge the international paternity of the Palestinian nation.

Notes

1. Concerning these discussions about the future of the territorial nation-state, see Badie (1995), Rosecrance (1996), Ruggie (1993), and Strange (1996).

2. For recent inquiries about the conditions of peaceful conflict resolution, see Inbar and Sandler (1997), Khouri (1998), and Lalor (1999). The Oslo process is described in Makovsky (1996), Maoz (1995), and Savir (1998).
3. *Not to Begin at the End*, Mahmoud Darwish, *Al-Ahram Weekly* On-line, May 10–16, 2001.
4. For two comprehensive accounts of Palestinian nation building, see Khalidi (1997) and Kimmerling and Migdal (1993).
5. For a more detailed presentation of this theoretical framework, see Jung (2001 and 2003).
6. A historical account of the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire is given by Anderson (1966). Hurewitz's books (1956a and 1956b) contain legal diplomatic documents relevant for Middle Eastern state formation.
7. For a general description of the Ottoman military and administrative reforms in the nineteenth century (*Tanzimat*), see Lewis (1961) and Zürcher (1993).
8. In applying the word colonizing to the Zionist project the author agrees with Benny Morris' point that although Zionism "was a colonizing and expansionist ideology," it served in the eyes of its leaders "no imperial power but rather a dispersed people" (Morris, 2001: 676). In this sense, Zionism should not be equated with imperial colonialism. However, from an Arab perspective this differentiation hardly exists.
9. For a detailed history of the PLO, see Rubin (1994) and Sayigh (1997).
10. With the rise of religious movements on both sides, "the holiness of Jerusalem has acquired a new centrality" (Armstrong, 2000: 6). Today, Jerusalem is an important symbol for the modern identity of both Israelis and Palestinians (Khalidi, 1997: 18). Concerning the rising political importance of Jerusalem, see Dumper (1997).
11. An overview of the development of Israeli security perceptions is given in the article by Schiff (1999).
12. Concerning the crucial role of the United States even before the demise of the Soviet Union, see the article by Telhami (1999), who describes the Camp David Process as an Israeli–Egyptian competition for alliance with the United States.
13. In retrospect this "strategic mistake" can also be interpreted as a necessary adjustment to the factual support that Saddam Hussain enjoyed among the Palestinian people. Indeed, a major cleft between the international and the societal level of analysis is visible here. While the PLO became temporarily isolated in the international arena, joining the Iraqi side was vital in order to guarantee public support for the PLO leadership (cf. Noble, 1991: 156–59).
14. A comprehensive account of the emergence of a specific Palestinian national movement after the First World War is given by Porath (1974).

15. Despite the destruction of the rather embryonic Palestinian nationalist infrastructure in the first Arab–Israeli war, the domination of pan-Arab rhetoric contributed heavily to the "disappearance" of Palestinian national identity between 1948 and 1964 (Khalidi, 1997: 178). Equally important from the Western perspective was the fact that Palestinians as a people were not on the agenda of subsequent U.S. administrations (cf. Christison, 1998).
16. For a general discussion on policies of liberalization in the Middle East, see the two volumes of Brynen et al. (1995). The Syrian example is covered by Kienle (1996).
17. Given the bulk of literature on political Islam, it is impossible to present here a fair bibliographical account. For a first reading, see Arjomand (1984), Etienne (1987), Esposito (1997), or Jansen (1997). Abu-Amr (1994) deals with the phenomenon in the West Bank and Gaza.
18. For the formation of the Zionist militias and then the Israeli armed forces, see Schiff (1985).
19. A comprehensive study of the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem is provided by Morris (1987).
20. Even if the educational policies of the UNRWA and of its major donor, the United States, might have aimed at the "dispersion of Palestinian refugees" and therefore solving the refugee question by permanent emigration, as Hassan Elnajjar (1993) argues, this goal has been contradicted by the factual strengthening of national consciousness amongst Palestinian refugees who had been educated through the institutions of UNRWA. For a brief history of UNRWA, see UNRWA (1986), the legal status of Palestinian refugees is discussed in Takkenberg (1997).
21. The situation in Jordan offers a different picture. There, the authorities granted all Palestinian refugees Jordanian citizenship. For more on Jordanian–Palestinian relations, see Hamarneh et al. (1997).
22. An account of these civil rights restrictions is given by Shiblak (1996: 42–45).
23. For this period of early Palestinian institution building in the diaspora, see Brand (1988), who examines the cases of Egypt, Kuwait, and Jordan.
24. Later governments followed this settlement policy and the presence of meanwhile more than 200,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza is a major obstacle for peace.
25. The following books give a comprehensive account of the Intifada: Flores (1989), Hunter (1991), and McDowall (1989).
26. Concerning the economic losses that were caused by the Intifada, see Hunter (1991: 147–48). The political and social transformations of Israeli society are the topic of Eisenstadt's book (1987); Zadka (1999) briefly presents the polarization of Israeli society that was brought about by these transformations.

27. About the strategic changes in the policies of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and of Hamas, see Shadid (1988) and Abd al-Qadir (1990).
28. Frisch came to a slightly different conclusion in arguing that not "new men" were instrumental in organizing the Intifada, but rather veteran PLO members who belonged to a subordinate middle command (Frisch, 1993: 254).

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Part 1



Global Discourses and Regional Politics

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Chapter 2



"Culture Blind and Culture Blinded": Images of Middle Eastern Conflicts in International Relations

Morten Valbjørn

Introduction[1]

> *It is important to recognize that the problem of "cultural diversity" has both theoretical and practical significance for the study of international relations in general and for the study of the Middle East in particular.*
>
> (Matthews, 1993: 9)

After a long and remarkable absence, the concept of culture has in recent years become a theme of discussion within the discipline of International Relations (IR).[2] Beyond being the site for the formulation of theoretical concepts, IR itself must also be considered an important producer of images that have implications for the perception of Middle Eastern conflicts. IR scholars often serve as advisers for policymakers, are members of brain trusts, and sometimes their theories even gain influence on a mass media level, as Samuel Huntington's (in)famous thesis of a coming clash of civilizations illustrates (1993, 1997). In order to reach a better understanding of Middle Eastern politics, it is therefore important to shed some light

on the various discourses within IR. In particular on the current debate whether cultural diversity must be recognized as playing a significant role in international relations and, if so, how this should be conceptualized. The positions taken in this debate are closely connected to the way in which regional conflicts in the Middle East are explained.

This chapter is of a meta-theoretical nature, aiming at the identification of a number of characteristic positions on the role of cultural diversity within IR. It further examines how various standpoints on this subject lead to very different images of the Middle East in general and the conflict-prone character of its politics in particular. These images are of interest because they play an important role in determining how Middle Eastern conflicts are perceived and how certain actions become (im)possible, (il)legitimate, and (un)necessary. The enquiry reveals how neither IR nor international relations seem to be as "culture blank" as supposed. But it also makes clear that a concept as essentially contested as that of culture is coupled with a large number of pitfalls. Thus it is argued that the two alternative culturalistic approaches, which are identified in this chapter, have replaced the general neglect of cultural diversity with a likewise problematic exaggerated focus on this theme: instead of being "blind to culture," in reality IR became "blinded by culture."

After a short introduction to the current debate on the (ir)relevance of an explicit concept of culture in studying international relations, the argumentation is divided into three main parts. These analyze different conceptions regarding the role of cultural diversity and Otherness in the study of international relations—an apparently "culture blank" position and two culturalistic alternatives respectively. These three positions are related to the question of whether the Middle East and its conflict-prone character should be explained by reference to certain cultural dynamics.

The Long-Awaited Arrival of Culture

> *As a discipline in constant interaction with Other(s), international relations cannot afford to be without the ability to resolve the critical issues that Otherness and difference raise. The question of the Other itself and the critical issues which it brings about, such as how to approach and represent different cultural Others, are extremely crucial for international relations theory.*
>
> (Keyman, 1997: 158–59)

Introductory textbooks often portray the disciplinary history of IR in terms of a number of "Great Debates" that since the foundation of

the discipline around the First World War are said to have taken place between two or three so-called paradigms or main traditions (Wæver, 1997). Given the interaction between the diverse communities of the world as its object, it would be natural to expect that IR had debated intensely the question of how to address the essentially contested concept of culture, as well as the associated issues of cultural diversity and representations of Otherness.[3] If the concept of culture is perceived in its differential sense—where it refers to something separating groups of people from each other—one would assume an extensive discussion within IR concerning cultural diversity much as Keyman points to in the above (see also Walker, 1984; Bozeman, 1994; Lapid and Kratochwill, 1996). However, none of the so-called Great Debates within IR have been actual cultural debates and in many ways one might endorse Preizwerk's regretful conclusion that the encounter between different cultures and the role of this encounter in international relations has been the unwritten chapter in our textbooks on international relations (1976: vi).

Though there are still only a few IR textbooks that contain a chapter on culture (e.g. Baylis and Smith, 2000), IR has undergone certain changes in the past years. The increasing interest of the Social Sciences in questions concerning cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness has thus also left its mark on IR. This has been demonstrated by the emergence of titles such as *Kultur im Aufwind, Going Cultural, The Culture of Insecurity, The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory, Culture and Security, The Culture of National Security, The Clash of Civilizations, Culture & Conflict Resolution, Culture in World Politics, The Cultural Construction of International Relations,* and so on.[4]

This "cultural turn" by no means has a form that elevates it to the status of a new Great Debate. Nonetheless, it deserves attention. It is addressing a line of fundamental questions that have been long discussed within other disciplines concerned with the encounter between different societies, disciplines such as Anthropology, Area Studies, and Post-Colonial Studies, but which have been almost neglected within IR, although these questions may have far-reaching consequences for how one relates to international relations in different parts of the world—among these the Middle East.

In opposition to the Great Debates, which have been taking place between the three IR main traditions or "paradigms"—Realism, Liberalism, and Globalism[5]—this new debate on culture involves new actors, while it has also led to a realignment among old adversaries. On one side of the new battle line we will find a number of positions outside the IR mainstream, which want to place the issue of culture

at the top of the IR agenda. On the other side, the three main traditions for once have joined forces in a mutual rejection of the idea that the study of international relations is a precondition for considerations concerning cultural diversity or the attached issue of the representation of Otherness.

The Middle East as a Region Like Any Other

> *The theoretical approach and the argument here are general in their nature and do not regard the Middle East as neither a complex object, nor a comparatively specific one [sic!].*
>
> (Hansen, 2000: 11)

At first sight, it may seem difficult to see how the positions taken in this rather (meta)theoretical debate on culture have any links to the way the international relations of the Middle East are approached. The abovementioned realignment between the three main traditions may thus appear difficult to retrieve when it comes to analyses of the Middle East, rather it is the diversity of analysis that is evident within the mainstream of IR.

Thus, beyond the usual differences between analyses subscribing to different IR traditions, it is also possible to detect different approaches to the Middle East within the same traditions, depending on whether an analysis is based on what in the following is termed an "external" or "internal" notion of a region.

The Middle East as a Shifting Strategic Concept

> *[The Middle East] had been and would be in the future a geopolitical no man's land...destined to be a disputed area between Russia and the maritime powers.*
>
> (According to Mahan, in Dietl, 1999: 1)

According to an "external" regional understanding, the Middle East is basically perceived as a loosely delimited area defined by its position and function within a larger international system and the logic at the regional level is supposed to be a reflection of this international system. As a consequence, the central actors and most important sources of conflict are assumed to be international rather than regional. In other words, the Middle East will first and foremost figure as a kind

of "shifting strategic concept," as once remarked by Mahan, who a century ago coined the term "Middle East" (Bilgin, 1998; Dietl, 1999: 1; L.C. Brown, 2001).

This external perception of regions has in particular enjoyed broad recognition within the tradition of Realism. During the Cold War, the Middle East was often perceived through a bipolar prism, through which for instance "the Arab Cold War" appeared as a regional reflection of the international system, just like the Arab–Israeli conflict was regarded as an expression of superpower rivalry. This perception is still evident in more recent studies such as Hansen's neo-Realistic analysis of Middle Eastern international relations. Hansen, for instance, attributes phenomena such as the Gulf War and the Oslo process primarily to the international system's transition from bi- to unipolarity (2000).

This notion of regions is also represented within the tradition of Globalism, though in a quite different way. This views the Middle East first and foremost as part of a periphery within a global hierarchical capitalistic world system. The extent to which the region differs from other parts of the periphery is mainly regarded as a result of its huge oil resources. These are supposed to have drawn the Middle East more into the global economy than the remaining peripheries and hereby transformed the Middle East into one of the "zones of storms" (cf. Amin, 1991 and 1982). Accordingly, Middle Eastern conflicts are neither perceived as a reflection of superpower rivalries nor as shifts in the balance of power but rather attributed to the immanent contradictions within this larger system dominated by the "Center." A true understanding of the contemporary Middle East and its supposedly conflict-prone character, therefore, must emphasize the impact of this capitalist world system and its leading powers (Mansour, 1996: 177).

The Middle East as a Subordinate International System

> *Policies based upon the assumption of global bipolarity will be unsuccessful in the Middle East. . . . it is far more likely that the Middle Eastern states will feel compelled to act in terms of their own complex system so as to preserve their individual position within the Middle Eastern structure.*
>
> (Binder, 1958: 427)

In contrast to these pronounced external approaches, it is also possible to identify a more "internal" understanding of regions within the

main traditions of IR. Rather than reducing the regional players to mere puppets in a global superpower or center/periphery conflict, this strand of literature deals with Middle Eastern international relations as a subsystem. This has its own logic that, rather than seeing this as deriving from a larger global system, primarily regards it as the result of the interaction between regional players who are attributed the most importance.

This understanding has been particularly prevalent within the tradition of Liberalism. There, the interest of the 1970s and 1990s for "comparative regionalism" found amongst other things expression in research on regional patterns of interaction and interdependence (Cantori and Spiegel, 1970; Thompson, 1981; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995). The rapidly growing oil profits of the crude-oil–exporting Arab countries, not least in the 1970s, gave rise to (unfulfilled) expectations that extensive labor and capital movements across the Arab borders, supplemented by currents of ideas, values, and consumption patterns, would create a line of spillover dynamics and thus pave the way for a dense Arab economic and political integration. This process would in the end transform the Middle East into a "security community" such as was the case in the once equally conflict-ridden European region (Mallakh, 1978; Ibrahim, 1982).

Regarding the other parts of IR mainstream, this "internal" understanding of regions has not caused a corresponding degree of optimism. The Globalist tradition has emphasized how the oil boom, apart from creating a greater Arab interdependence, has to a much larger extent contributed to dividing the region into an economic hierarchy of asymmetrical relations of dependence. In their reading, the Middle East appears as an economic subsystem with its own center/periphery division within a larger center/periphery system (Alnasrawi, 1986). This point of view is, for instance, mirrored in Waterbury's argument that the most important dividing line between Middle Eastern states is between the petroleum-rich and the petroleum-poor countries (1978: 21). In a similar vein, Luciani's theory supposes that the widely different interests of allocation and production states will, in terms of regional interaction, create a number of fundamental tensions in Middle Eastern international relations (1990).

Within the Realist tradition, it is also possible to identify analyses that link the conflict-ridden character of Middle Eastern international relations to regional instead of international conditions, although they maintain the centrality of the balance of power (or threat) in their approaches. This is true for Walt's neo-Realist study of alliance behavior in which he argues that, in the forming of alliances, regional

states are paying less attention to the international distribution of capabilities than to the capabilities and intentions of their neighbors (1987: 179). With reference to Waltz's notion on the less stable nature of multipolarity in comparison to bipolarity (1979), Walt is thus attributing the conflict-ridden character of Middle Eastern international relations to the multipolar nature of the regional system (1987: 266).

The Privilege of the Universal

> *A careful symptomatic reading, or mapping, of international relations theory reveals the dominant and privileged position that the universal occupies over the particular.*
>
> (Keyman, 1997: 166)

Even though there is a broad range of views on how to perceive Middle Eastern international relations, both between and within the three main traditions, it is nevertheless possible to argue that the different approaches share some more basic traits that relate to how IR mainstream places itself in the emerging cultural debate.

As previously mentioned, there is a remarkable consensus within the main IR traditions that there is no particular need to address questions concerning cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness in the study of international relations. The actual arguments for neglecting these aspects have been manifold. From a Realist perspective the dismissal of culture has been substantiated with an argument that the international anarchy—whatever the status of cultural diversity is—is forcing everybody to act in accordance with the same logic of self-help. Within the tradition of Liberalism it has been argued that rather than dealing with culture in its differential meaning, it is central to look at the concept in its generic meaning, that is in the sense of a universal human culture instead of a multiplicity of different cultures. Finally, Globalists have argued that cultural diversity should be conceived as different expressions of the same underlying phenomenon—an expanding capitalist world system—and this ought to be the primary object of attention.

In the present context, however, what is noteworthy about these arguments on the irrelevance of culture is not their apparent differences, but their likeness at a more basic level. All approaches set the importance of cultural diversity aside, arguing that in one way or the other international relations are characterized by a universal logic and that practitioners of IR should focus on this universal logic rather

than on secondary phenomena such as culture. In this sense, the remarkable consensus on the irrelevance of the concept of culture among the different main IR traditions originates in the fact that they all base their thinking on universalistic conceptions. In turn, one may argue with Chan that the controversy between the IR main traditions has primarily evolved around the question of how to substantialize the same, globally encompassing, universal phenomenon (Chan, 1993: 425). Consequently this consensus on the universal logic of international relations leads to the assumption that it is possible to apply the same, general, culturally unspecified terminology, and theoretical approaches, regardless of which part of the world is being studied. In other words, one may argue that the mainstream of IR has viewed itself, as well as its object of study, international relations, as culture blank.

This universalistic conception is particularly obvious in analyses of Middle Eastern relations that take their departure in an external view of regions, working with the explicit assumption that regional conditions are subordinated to global dynamics. Yet it may seem surprising that this would also apply to those approaches that take their departure in the internal regional understanding. They ascribe a regional dynamic to Middle Eastern international relations and reject the description of regional players as mere puppets. Nevertheless, in conceptionalizing regional players according to universal models of actors, they found themselves in the camp of universalistic approaches. Although they place greater emphasis on regional actors, they do not regard them as qualitatively different from other players in the international system. In addition, they view Middle Eastern international relations basically as a result of dynamics that apply to other theaters of international politics. Thus, the field of comparative regionalism shared the expectation—especially during the 1970s—that an increasingly interdependent Middle East would be pushed toward integration by the same spillover mechanisms as seen in Europe. In a similar fashion, Walt stresses that the balance-of-threat behavior, which he believes to be found in the Middle East, is far from being limited to this particular region (1987: 262 ff.) and Luciani explicitly notes that his proposed distinction between allocation and production states might be relevant outside of the Middle East as well (1990: 84). The divergences between approaches based on one or the other perception-of-regions are thus stemming from differences in opinion on the relative importance of the regional level in relation to the international—quite similar to the classic levels-of-analysis debate (Singer, 1961)—rather than on the question of whether Middle Eastern

international relations are basically working in accordance with the same kind of logic as international relations elsewhere.

Since none of the abovementioned approaches regard Middle Eastern international relations as unique or something *sui generis*, a more thorough contemplation of the epistemological question of the representation of Otherness seems unnecessary. The approaches either wholly neglect regional actors, as has been to a certain extent the case with Hansen and Amin, conceive them as principally identical to all other players, as for instance Walt and Luciani, or put them under a general developmental dynamic, as is the case with comparative regionalism. Regardless of whether the Middle East is understood as a loose geographical area or as a meaningful political unit, the universalistic IR mainstream shapes the Middle East basically as a region like any other region, as a region whose international relations and conflict-ridden character are neither extraordinary nor particularly complex to study and explain.

Culture Blank or Culture Blind?

> *[IR is] a discipline which speaks partially, but which has "assumed" and "declared" as if universally.*
>
> (Chan, 1997: 114)

An obvious explanation as to why this universalistic concept has gained much dissemination within IR is, needless to say, that international relations are actually working in accordance with some sort of universalistic logic that enables us to observe all international actors and phenomena through the same culture-blank prism. In this case it would be only natural that the vast majority of those within IR ignore the issue of cultural diversity. Before drawing this convenient and somewhat obvious conclusion, it might, however, be appropriate to introduce some of those criticisms that within the recent culture debate have been addressed in relation to this universalistic notion of international relations. The criticism that also appears relevant to the study of Middle Eastern international relations involves several dimensions, which may be divided into two sorts of problems that often arise in discussions of cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness. In the following these are labeled "Blindness to the Other" and "Blindness to the Self."

Blindness to the Other

> *The plurality of actors leads to a plurality of rationalities interacting in the international system ... it excludes the possibility that a universal system or theory could account for the International system.*
>
> (Badie and Smouts, in Leander, 1997: 160)

The first sort of problem, "Blindness to the Other," concerns itself with international relations and questions to which extent the focus on similarities and regularities, which are linked to the universalistic conception, may in fact have made IR blind to the various aspects of diversity in international relations. Bertrand Badie has explicitly dealt with this question and advanced several of the characteristic arguments that are usually advocated in favor of viewing international relations as being characterized by a far greater diversity than is suggested by the IR mainstream (Badie, 1989, 2000; Badie and Birnbaum, 1994; Badie and Smouts, 1999; cf. Leander, 1997).

According to Badie, the global spread of the Westphalian state system does not justify a uniform perception of the international players or a notion of the (Westphalia) state as central and unequivocal. It must be remembered that the non-European states were founded both under other circumstances and in another international context than the European states. From this perspective, each state has an individual history, which also affects how the "imported model of state"—as Badie puts it (Badie and Birnbaum, 1994: 155)—is actually working. Badie distinguishes between far more models of states than is generally the case in IR. Given the factual diversity of actors, the argument of Badie and Smouts suggests that international interaction may also take on various forms. Related to this, Badie points out both that weak post-colonial states will face challenges of a different nature than the well-established European states (see also David, 1991) and that the different players may have backgrounds within various forms of political culture. Accordingly, these different players may be guided by different perceptions regarding the legitimate means and ends of their actions.

These objections also appear relevant in a Middle Eastern context, and in turn there has been a far-reaching tradition for discussing the (ir)relevance of the Westphalia notion of the state for the Middle East. Apart from statements about a categorical incompatibility of Muslim political thought and the concept of sovereign states (Lewis, 1974; Kedourie, 1987; Bozeman, 1994) or dismissive descriptions of Middle Eastern states as nothing but "tribes with flags," critics

usually refer to the fact that the modern Middle Eastern states, of which the majority are relatively recently established entities, have had to deal with the presence of external superpowers and subnational loyalty patterns, such as is also the case for post-colonial states in many other parts of the world. In addition, Middle Eastern state formation was accompanied by transnational movements such as pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism whose supranational visions about a hierarchical principle of order should have destabilized the Middle Eastern state system and especially delegitimized the Arab states (Barnett, 1998; Niva, 1999). This tension between what has at times been referred to as *raison d'État* versus *raison de la nation*, should amongst other things have meant that:

> ...ambitious states have far greater potential than elsewhere to use transstate appeals as instruments of foreign policy, since the loyalties of citizens may be attracted by the leaders of other states which seem better to represent Arabism and Islam (or some other substate identity), behavior anomalous in a nation-state system. Also, foreign policy has more immediate implications for internal security than elsewhere. State leaders, to protect their domestic support, must legitimize themselves by asserting their own Arab nationalist credentials and discrediting those of rival states. (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, 1997: 14)

At the same time, Harik has stressed that Middle Eastern states have encountered these sub- and supranational challenges with very different backgrounds and resources. While states such as Jordan, Syria, and Iraq are to a large extent outcomes of European colonial policies rather than indigenous forces and have therefore been particularly vulnerable to pan-Arabic accusations of being artificial constructions, this does not apply to a number of Middle Eastern states outside the Fertile Crescent, which have a long history as meaningful political entities (Harik, 1990; see also Brown, 2001: xxi ff.).

Apparently international relations inside and outside the Middle East are characterized by a far greater diversity than the impression the IR mainstream usually conveys. Furthermore, Badie points to indications that the different homogenization and globalization processes are not going to change this fact. On the contrary, he anticipates a growing diversification of the international arena as the lack of legitimacy among the "imported states" allegedly fuels sub- and supranational solidarities that disregard the current system of states (Leander, 1997: 159). In other words, the globalization of the European state system has paradoxically furthered rather than eliminated the diversity

of international relations. This also applies to the Middle Eastern context. In his discussion of how the world is at the same time falling apart and coming together reluctantly, Barber (1992) for instance chose to label the more fragmentizing dimensions of globalization as *jihad*—the Islamic term for "holy war," among other things—and in general the politicization of Islam in the Middle East has often been perceived as an argument against the Liberalist idea that we somehow are moving toward a secularized global common culture. Thus, the tendency to focus upon similarities and regularities that are connected to the universalistic conception seemingly has established itself at the expense of the awareness of more particularistic aspects of international relations. In other words, the IR mainstream appears to have become Blind to the Other.

Blindness to the Self

> *While grasping at a global or universal phenomenon, it [IR] does so almost entirely within one culturally and intellectually circumscribed perspective.*
>
> (Walker, 1984: 182)

While the line of critique in the above first and foremost addressed the question of whether international relations are as universal as usually claimed by IR, another kind of critique, "Blindness to the Self," is related to the nature of the discipline itself, as it questions whether IR really is as "culture blank" as often claimed. Walker has thus called attention to how IR is characterized by pervasive metatheoretical contradiction (1984: 182). At first sight, IR might, due to its object of study, appear to be a truly *global* discipline. This also seems to be confirmed by the absence within IR of cleavages and debates based on regional or national criteria.[6] However, when observed more closely, it is clear that the perspective of IR has usually been far from truly global. As an academic discipline, IR is of European origin and must in terms of the number of scholars and intellectual flows today be regarded as "an American Social Science" as once suggested by Hoffman (1977; see also Wæver, 1998; Smith, 2000; Crawford and Jarvis, 2001; Darby and Paolini, 1994).

While this Western or American status of IR does not, in principle, counter the predominantly culture-blank self-perception within the IR mainstream, a number of circumstances suggests that in reality the theoretical and conceptual apparatus of IR is perhaps not as culturally unspecific as claimed. First, most of the prominent IR theories

are founded on empirical studies that either concern the Westphalia state system in Europe (Walker, 1984: 5; Bleiker, 1993: 403) or address issues of particular relevance for Western or American interests, while studies of relations between non-Western players or pre-Westphalia conditions hold a far more marginal position (Walker, 1984; Bleiker, 1993; Biersteker, 1999).[7] As noted by Brand, for a long time no IR scholar "of his or her right mind would have thought of trying to build a career by applying or testing IR theory to areas outside of the United States or Europe" (1999: 135). This also applies to Middle Eastern international relations, where intraregional relations play, theoretically and empirically, a subordinated role in comparison to the abundance of studies concerning at least American interests in the region (Anderson, 1990: 74; Korany and Dessouki, 1991: 8 ff.; Korany, 1991; Haley, 1991).

Second, IR theory is to a large extent based on concepts, issues, and assumptions that in *time* and *space* are closely linked to the period of time following the European Renaissance (Walker, 1984: 4 ff.). In her study of the cultural construction of international relations, Jahn, for instance, called attention to how the central notion within IR of a supposedly precultural "state of nature" is not only an important part of European political philosophy, but also a product of a particular historical event, the intercultural encounter between the Spaniards and the American people, and accordingly is already highly charged with cultural, social, and ethical meanings (Jahn, 1999: 412, see also 2000). In a similar way, Korany has, within Islamic and Confucian political thinking, identified definitions of war other than the Clausewitzian notion that is usually found within IR (1986: 549; see also Johnson, 1997). Finally, it is worth noting how Chan has identified alternative meanings and forming of theory on international relations in a number of non-Western countries. Even though these alternative perceptions of international relations are almost completely absent within the (Western) IR debate, it might not be inconceivable that they in some way might play a role in the actual implementation of non-Western international relations (Chan, 1993, 1994).

Even though this has not been much acknowledged, IR seems to a large extent to be attached to a specific cultural perspective. The universalistic and alleged culture-blank conception within IR might therefore most of all be regarded as an expression of some kind of provincialism, where predominantly Anglo-American experiences in an ethnocentric way have been mistaken for something universal. In other words, the IR mainstream does seem to suffer from lack of

awareness of its own particular perspective, Blindness to the Self, so to speak.

Relating these two types of blindness—Blindness to the Other and Blindness to the Self—IR appears less culture blank than culture blind. It seems to be blind with regard to the diversity of international relations and the culturally different Others, as well as to its own culturalistic particularity. It is in this light that cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness appear as anything but irrelevant for the study of international relations within and outside the Middle East region.

International Relations as Intercultural Relations

> *Whatever the context, whatever the cultural conditioning . . . there seems to be a case for more attention to cultural factors in world politics, and not less. But the definition of culture, theory advances about it, even its mere description, are contested.*
>
> (Vincent, 1980: 263)

While there might be a growing awareness in recent years that the mainstream of IR is more culture blind than culture blank, this does not comprise any agreement on how to avoid this culture blindness. Within the emergent culture debate it is thus possible to identify very different views on how a less culture-blind study of international relations should be pursued. In simplified terms, one might distinguish between two typical approaches that are based on what in the following is labeled as an *essentialist* and a *relational* concept of culture respectively. As is clarified below, it is by no means insignificant which of these two concepts serves as the outset if one wants to address international relations in general and the Middle East in particular.

Cultural Diversity as a Diversity of Cultures

> *Political systems are grounded in cultures . . . present day inter*national *relations are therefore by definition inter*cultural *relations.*
>
> (Bozeman, 1994: 6)

According to an essentialist conception of culture, culture is, on the one hand, perceived as a totality, since societies are believed to posses

an internal order and logic, as is the case with classical definitions of culture as a "whole way of living." However in contrast to the various universalistic approaches, this logic is only regarded as partial, as the world is perceived as consisting of a plurality of cultures, each with their own unique internal orders distinctive from each other.

From this point of view cultural diversity will first and foremost be perceived as a diversity of cultures, each with their own unique logic, and the understanding of international relations will be framed by this conception rather than by a notion of a single global international system with an assumed universal logic. This is evident in the works of Bozeman and Huntington, who are recognized exponents of this essentialist understanding of culture.[8] Bozeman speaks of the presence of various "culture zones" with different "collective mind-sets" (1994: 5), as portrayed on Huntington's world map where the world is divided into nine civilizations (1997: 26–27). Rather than presuming that international relations function by a mutual universal logic, these authors suggest that we are dealing with a diversity of culturally specific principles in relation to the employment of international relations.

If international relations—or "inter*cultural* relations" as Bozeman thinks they should rightly be called—are marked by such cultural diversity, it will no longer be possible to ignore the more epistemological question on how to approach and represent cultural Others. In other words, how does one achieve insight into these supposedly very diverse culturally specific principles for international relations? In this respect, advocates of the essentialist perspective emphasize the necessity of uncovering the assumed unique and profound logic that the various cultures are supposed to be classed with. This may be achieved by studying central religious, philosophical, and historical texts of other cultures while focusing on "mental and moral persuasions, be they religious, philosophical, or ideological; on basic values and norms within each society, and on time-transcendent perceptions of the outer world" (Bozeman, 1994: 6; see also Huntington, 1993: 49).

The Middle East as a Unique Islamic Region

Contemporary Muslim approaches to the conduct of international relations and to political institutions on the national and international level are anchored in the history of the medieval Muslim Empire. Efforts to understand this section of the present society of

> *nations have to begin, therefore with an analytical scrutiny of the early records of the Dar al-Islam as an international community.*
>
> (Bozeman, 1994: 362)

This first suggestion on how to avoid some of the culture-blind pitfalls is also connected to a very different perception of the Middle Eastern international relations and their conflict-prone nature. In opposition to the predominant perception within the IR mainstream, the Middle East will, based on an essentialist cultural understanding, appear as a region like no other; more specifically, as a unique culture zone in which international relations operate by their own culture-specific principles. Among the proponents of the perception of the Middle East as a unique cultural entity it is possible to identify various suggestions as to what this uniqueness is supposed to be assigned to. While some have referred to a unique Arab culture (Patai, 1973; Dessouki and Matar, 1983), others have pointed to a special Ottoman culture (Brown, 1984). However, in recent years a notion of the Middle East as a particular Islamic cultural system has gained prominence. Huntington, for instance, speaks of the Middle East as a distinct Islamic civilization (1997: 45), and Bozeman determines Islam as the unchallenged essence of a culturally distinct religio-political system in the Middle East (1994: xx).

From this perspective, a more profound understanding of international relations in the Middle East must take its point of departure from the primary sources of Islam. Through studies of the Quran, the tradition (*hadith*), and various accounts from the early days of Islam it is assumed to be possible to uncover the essence or logic of the supposed uniqueness of Middle Eastern international relations. In analyses departing from a conception of the Middle East as a unique Islamic cultural entity—such as those by Bozeman, Huntington, and Lewis (the latter being one of the major figures within this kind of analysis of the Middle East)—we will find that international relations in a Middle Eastern context should take their starting point in fundamentally different principles than those that characterize the Westphalia state system.

While the latter is based on anarchy among a plurality of sovereign and secular territorial states, the Islamic primary sources should reveal a concept of international relations that is founded in a religious and hierarchic principle of God's indivisible and absolute sovereignty. First, this implies that the Muslim community (the *umma*) should serve as analytical focus rather than the territorial state. In this reading, the world appears divided into two fundamentally different

areas: a Muslim area (*dar al-islam*), which is defined as an area of peace, and a non-Muslim area, which is perceived as an area of war (*dar al-harb*). To substantiate this bifurcation, Bernard Lewis refers to a *hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammed declares: "unbelief is one nation" (Lewis, 1974: 175), just as the Quran's Sura 3:105 addresses Muslims with "be ye not as those who separated." Second, it is not possible to let international relations be founded either on mutual recognition or on a distinction between politics and religion. Lewis hereby explains that a Muslim polity may not recognize the permanent existence of another polity outside Islam. He refers to Sura 60:1: "O ye who believe! Choose not My enemy and your enemy for allies" (Lewis, 1974: 206 and 175; see also Bozeman, 1971: 79). In the Quran, Sura 9:5 also states "slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush." In ascribing Islam the status of a missionary religion, that is that Muslims have a particular religious obligation to convert others to Islam, Lewis claims that this missionary devotion is without a limit of time or space and, therefore, must continue until the whole world has either converted to the Islamic faith or submitted to Islamic rule (1988: 73; see also Bozeman, 1994: xxiv; Huntington, 1997: 211). According to another *hadith*, the Prophet Muhammed supposedly declared that he was ordered to fight until everybody says there is no God but Allah. Based on this reading of Islamic sources, a stable and lasting peace in the world implies that the *dar al-islam* includes all of humanity. Until then, there will be "a morally necessary, legally and religiously obligatory state of war" (Lewis, 1988: 73; see also Bozeman, 1992: 63; Huntington, 1997: 212).

Apparently the primary sources of Islam contain principles with a potential for conflict-oriented and expansive forms of international relations that appear completely at odds with the Westphalia state system. The conflict-prone nature of Middle Eastern international relations may not, according to this perspective, be explained by fluctuations in the global balance of power, in the multipolar nature of the Middle East, or by the region's position in a center/periphery system. Rather, it must be sought in the particular Islamic culture. This is evident in Huntington's claim that the fundamental problem for the West regarding the Middle East is not Islamic fundamentalism, but Islam as such (1997: 217). And since Islam according to Bozeman is a time-transcendent vigorous faith that will be with us forever (1992: 253), the prospects of a more peaceful Middle East are very bleak in the near future.

Uncovering or Positioning?

> *Culture (or any form of unity) cannot be a unified object of analysis independent of its articulations and readings. In other words, cultures have no intrinsic or essential identity or unity—outside history and politics—that can be reached by a "transparent" reading. Rather, cultures are created and interpreted by human practices. Islamic cultural practices, like other practices, are a product of articulation, rather than a manifestation or uncovering of an Islamic essence.*
>
> (Sayyid, 1994: 266)

In applying an essentialist conception of culture, scholars might not only come to a perception of the nature of international relations inside and outside the Middle East that is radically different from those found within the main traditions of IR, they might be able to acknowledge some of the particularistic aspects in international relations that IR has been accused of neglecting. This applies to both the diversity of actors and the various forms of international interaction. However, this first bid for a less culture-blind approach to international relations is also related to a number of problems as appears in the following reintroduction of two sorts of problems, which are, as mentioned earlier, generally attached to discussions concerning cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness.

Blindness to the Other

> *Support can be found in Islamic sources for virtually any interpretation of Islamic theory of international relations, its implications for other peoples, and the prospects of conflict between Muslims and others.*
>
> (Hunter, 1997: 62)

At first glance, it may come as a surprise that problems associated with a "Blindness to the Other" would appear to have much relevance in this context. Unlike the culture-blind IR mainstream, the essentialist approach has its starting point in the fundamental assumption of the existence of a diversity of cultures, whose unique essences it is imperative to uncover if one is to have any hope of achieving a true insight into the nature of international relations in different parts of the world. However, awareness, in principle, of cultural diversity need not produce either any substantial insights or a better actual understanding of the Other (Keyman, 1997: 169). Thus, it is relevant

to examine more critically the assumption that through studies of various religious and philosophical texts it is possible to uncover a particular logic or essence, which may serve as a reference point for the nature of international relations within a certain area.

The previous section demonstrated how it is possible, within the primary sources of Islam, to identify principles for a particular expansionist and conflict-oriented form of international relations that is completely at odds with the Westphalia state system. However, the very same sources also provide support for a quite different kind of international interaction.[9] In Sura 49:13, for example, the Quran states: "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another." This statement could be interpreted to mean that God initiated the plurality of the world and, therefore, that the world's internal divisions should not be perceived as being in opposition to the will of God. The existence of a particular Muslim community, the *umma*, is thus not in contradiction to the existence of a plurality of polities both within and outside the *dar al-Islam*. This view was expressed by Ibn Taymiyya, who, in the thirteenth century, is said to have stated that, given the essential religious unity of Islam, there is no need for unity in terms of its political regime (Piscatori, 1992: 320).

The primary sources of Islam contain numerous statements that support quite different principles for international relations than the expansionist and aggressive ones that have otherwise received most attention. First, there are quite a number of passages suggesting that there is no reason why Muslim states should not both recognize and sign agreements with non-Muslim states. Sura 8:72 reads: "it is your duty to help (them) [other Muslims] except against a folk between whom and you there is a treaty." Likewise Sura 8:61 states: "and if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it." Also the life of the Prophet gives examples of this conciliatory approach, in particular the treaties he signed with the Jews of Medina, with the Christians of Najran, or the famous Hudaibiyya treaty that he signed in 628 with the polytheists of Mecca. Second, Islam's status as a missionary religion does not necessarily entail violent behavior, as it is stated in Sura 2:256: "there is no compulsion in religion." With regard to the usage of the term *jihad*, it is worth noting that this term can also refer to a variety of issues in the struggle of an individual for an exemplary pious life. Finally, when it comes to religiously sanctioned war, this seems to be of a defensive rather than an offensive character. Sura 2:190, for instance, states: "fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors."

This position is confirmed by a *hadith* according to which the prophet said that war is deception (Piscatori, 1986: 46). In conclusion, the primary sources of Islam provide ample room for a description of a "tolerant non-violent Islam that accommodates itself to the reality of political pluralism and non-Muslim centers of power" (Piscatori, 1992: 317).

Rendering this alternative account of international relations based on the primary sources of Islam does not mean entering an exegetical debate about which reading is more correct or in accordance with what Islam "really is." As Halliday has noted, a discussion on "the true Islam" would be a futile and endless endeavor as its primary sources are so ambiguous—as is the case with other religions—that support can be found for virtually any interpretation of the Islamic theory of international relations (Halliday, 1995; see also Hunter, 1997).

The purpose is rather to question the very notion that studying cultural primary sources will in any way reveal some particular disguised essence that a culturally special form of international interaction could be referred to. The assumed act of "uncovering" seems on closer inspection to be an act of "positioning" characterized by an active and deliberate choice between different possible readings rather than by a dispassionate unveiling of the particular logic of a certain culture, and the explanation for the choice of different interpretations might be found as much in the observer as in the sources (Hall, 1996: 111 ff.). Therefore, it is relevant to try to determine on what grounds this "positioning" takes place.

Blindness to the Self

> *What objective and factual knowledge provides is a substantiation of the already established classification of non-Western culture.... Thus, the Other then becomes defined with respect to what it is not rather than what it is.*
>
> (Keyman, 1997: 162)

While an essentialist approach at one level differs fundamentally from the perception of international relations within the mainstream of IR, at another and more epistemological level the universalistic and essentialist approach appears to share a number of commonalities with it. Like large parts of IR mainstream, proponents of this first conception of culture usually do not pay much attention to how the standpoints and aprioristic assumptions of the observer may influence the way the Other is represented. While the widespread notion of international actors as fundamentally similar within IR mainstream seems to be

closely connected to the prevalence of a universalistic conception of international relations, the notion of cultural diversity as a diversity of cultures seems to have led to roughly the opposite result. Thus, by perceiving cultures as "partial totalities" deviating fundamentally from each other, subscribers to the essentialist approach seem to be inclined to direct most attention to how the Other appears to be different from the observer himself. In this way, factual knowledge is mostly used to substantiate an aprioristic assumption of the absolute difference or "Otherness" of the Other. Apart from stressing some and dimming other aspects of the Other this also implies that the observer is far more actively present in the description of the Other than what the essentialist cultural understanding would initially imply. Thus, the way the Other is represented may be very closely connected to what the observer regards himself to be, and the image of the Other might therefore more than anything else appear as a kind of mirror image of the observer.

Returning to the discussion of "uncovering" versus "positioning" in connection with the question of what Islamic primary sources tell us about international relations, it is quite telling how advocates of an essentialist cultural understanding such as Bozeman, Huntington, and Lewis—who all openly confess to a "Western culture"—systematically dwell on passages in the Quran that confirm the presumption of the uniqueness of the Middle East, while they just as systematically ignore the passages that could have supported a view of the possible compatibility between (Western) Westphalia principles and Islamic principles for international relations.

Thus, when crossing the battle line in the current cultural debate one will be able to identify a culturalistic alternative, which on the one hand escapes a number of the culture-blind pitfalls. However, it is questionable whether this approach will in practice make IR more capable of relating to the international relations of the Middle East and understanding what motivates the actual actors. First, one might fear that more or less latent antagonisms between different parts of the world are reified as fundamental cultural differences, while intercultural similarities and intracultural differences are ignored. If this is combined with some sort of cultural determinism, where actors are measured in terms of who they are rather than what they do, the clash of civilization as a self-fulfilling prophecy is imminent (Doty, 1996a: 165; Walt, 1997: 189).

Against that background, Hammond's assessment of Huntington's attempt to introduce culture to the study of international relations seems quite fitting. He concludes that Huntington—and the

advocates of an essentialist cultural understanding in general, one could say—have directed attention to the all-too-long–neglected question on cultural diversity in connection with the study of international relations. Unfortunately, however, he has been better at raising relevant questions than at offering attractive answers (Hammond, 1997: 132).

CULTURE AS A SIGNIFYING AND BOUNDARY-PRODUCING PRACTICE

> *Geopolitical processes of cultural dichotomizing, designating identity in distinction from Others, are important in the ways world orders are constructed.*
>
> (Dalby, 1990: 22–23)

While the point of departure in the few attempts to "cultivate" the study of international relations have mostly subscribed to the essentialist conception of culture, within the recent culture debate it is also possible to identify another perception of culture. This alternative approach is not only skeptical toward the pronounced universalism and culture blindness within large parts of IR mainstream, it is also very critical of the way the subscribers to an essentialist conception of culture (fail to) address the observer's role in the representation of different cultural Others. This skepticism has to a large extent been brought about by various "post-movements" of the Social Sciences—that is post-positivism, post-structuralism, and partly of post-colonial studies, especially Said's critique of orientalism.

From this alternative perspective, culture is first and foremost regarded as "a practice, a signifying practice through which meaning is socially constructed" (Keyman, 1997: 184). Thus, cultural diversity is not regarded as a diversity of cultures each with their own particular logic or essence. Instead, culture is associated with a signifying and boundary-producing practice in which an "Us" is constructed in opposition to a culturally differently described "Other." In accordance with the post-*structuralist* claim that meaning is established in relations of differences, this approach assumes that delimiting practices of describing oneself as different from something else constitute meaning and identity. As Said, one of the central figures within this conception of culture, explains:

> The development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction

> of identity—for identity . . . is finally a construction—involves establishing opposites and "other" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us." (1995: 332)

This also stresses the *post*-structuralist argument that differentiation is always contingent on which particular difference is perceived—ethnicity, gender, nationality, language, and the like. Thus, the construction of identity and meaning will always be related to a simultaneous accentuation of some relations of differences and neglect or disregard of others (differences between "them" and "us" and within "them" and "us" respectively). Only through this process is it possible to construct different and apparently homogenous cultural entities.

This alternative conception of culture has in particular been adopted by the so-called "dissident thoughts" of IR (e.g. Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989; Walker, 1990; Campbell, 1990, 1998; Doty, 1993, 1996a, 1996b). They regard the issue of cultural diversity as important for the study of international relations due to reasons very different from that given by the subscribers to an essentialist perception of culture. Instead of claiming that the world "in reality" is divided into a number of unique cultures, the argument is, so to say, turned upside down. Here it is argued that IR needs to take the question of cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness seriously because neither cultural entities nor state actors can be regarded as givens. Doty, for example, asserts that what subjects and objects are depends upon their representation in language. In this context, culture must first and foremost be perceived as a site or discursive location where questions of identity and difference, Self and Other, are negotiated and resolved in always-contingent ways (Doty, 1996b: 332). In a similar way Campbell posits " 'culture' as a relational site for the politics of identity, rather than a substantive phenomenon in its own right" (1998: 221). He further explains that:

> Identity is constituted in relation to difference. But neither is difference fixed by nature, given by God, or planned by international behavior. Difference is constructed in relation to identity. The problematic of identity/difference contains, therefore, no foundations that are prior to, or outside of, its operation. Whether we are talking of "the body" or "the state," or of particular bodies or states, the identity of each is performatively constituted. Moreover, the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an "inside" from an "outside," a "self" from an "other," a "domestic" from a "foreign." (1998: 9)

If it is through such a number of signifying and boundary-producing cultural practices that the constitution and reproduction of the state and the international system, the domestic and the foreign, the sovereign and the anarchic, are taking place, the question of how to approach and represent cultural Others must also be answered in a very different way than in the essentialists' approach. The main interest will not be on what characterizes cultural Others, but on how the construction of Others is taking place through representations within specific discourses. More specifically, advocates of a relational conception of culture will, primarily, be concerned with the interrelatedness of the construction of specific Others and the construction of identity. Regarding foreign policies, for example, Campbell suggests that, instead of being viewed as external orientations of pre-established states, they should be regarded as boundary-producing practices that are central to the (re)production of the identities in whose names they operate (Campbell, 1998: 68). Second, relationalists are interested in how the representation of Otherness is connected to a kind of performance of power in which reality is signified in a distinct way and that makes certain forms of actions (il)legitimate, (un)natural, (un)thinkable, or (im)possible to perform by and in relation to the Other. Thus, Doty has noticed how the social construction of a Third World, beyond being a site for the self-elaboration of the First World, has "enabled practices of domination, exploitation, and brutality, practices that probably would have been considered unthinkable, reprehensible, and unjustifiable were an alternative 'reality' taken seriously" (1996a: 13).

According to advocates of this alternative conception of culture, such a change of focus from *what* to *how* is going to give rise to a much more critical IR. In particular they aim at the politicization and denaturalization of the way boundaries are inscribed and identities are constructed in order to create a higher awareness of how representations of cultural diversity will always be arbitrary and socially constructed, as well as interwoven with power (Doty, 1993: 229; 1996b: 332; Campbell, 1998: 191 ff.). In this context, the field of enquiry has been expanded considerably as the representation of Otherness is taking place in a number of very different ways. Among other things, we find analyses of how TV series, movies, computer games, comic strips, novels, exhibitions, and the daily weather forecast contribute to the construction of international actors with particular identities, as well as to the production of consent as to which kind of international actions are to be regarded as (il)legitimate and (un)acceptable (e.g. O'Thuathail and Dalby, 1998; Weldes, 1999, 2003; Weldes et al., 1999; McAlister, 2001).

The Middle East as an Imaginary Region

> *Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely there, just as the Occident itself is not just there...such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made.*
>
> (Said, 1995: 5)

From this perspective, it is irrelevant to discuss whether the Middle East should be regarded as a region like all the others, as it is the case in the IR mainstream, or as a region like no other, as the essentialists would claim. Rather, regions should be seen as social constructions that are produced through specific discursive practices just like the international system and its various actors. Instead of discussing what the Middle East is, the relational conception of culture regards the Middle East as an imaginary region, where, first and foremost, it is important to focus on how the Middle East has been constructed through discursive practices and how this has extensive consequences on its international relations.

This focus characterizes Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1995), one of the principal works dealing with the Middle East in applying a relational conception of culture. Despite his principle recognition of the mere existence of societies with a location southeast of the Mediterranean, Said almost completely refrains from dealing with what characterizes these societies (1995: 5). Instead, he focuses on how European and American contexts have described and imagined the Middle East and how a particular "orientalist" way of thinking has functioned as a filter through which the Middle East is constructed as a unique oriental cultural entity. Even though the orientalist representations of the Middle East should have less to do with the Middle East than with the orientalists' own context (1995: 12), this does not mean that these representations are innocent or ineffectual. The European and American identity and way of performing power are thus closely interwoven with the conception of the Middle East as oriental and alien.

The orientalist conception of the Middle East functions as a constituting counterimage of European and American identity, of a so-called occidental culture whose supposedly democratic, rational, and enlightened character is contrasted by the depictions of a despotic, irrational, and barbaric Orient. According to Said, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image" (Said, 1995: 1–2). But orientalism also formed a central element of "a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority

over the Orient" (Said, 1995: 3). The French and British colonial representation of Middle Eastern societies as passive, backward, and inferior justified and subsequently legitimized their colonization. This close connection between orientalist descriptions of the Middle East and different kinds of performance of power allegedly does not belong only to the past. According to Said, the situation of today bears a lot of resemblance to the time of British and French colonialism. He points to how U.S. military interventions, the Carter Doctrine, and the establishment of Rapid Deployment Forces often have been preceded by popular and academic discussions on the threat from "political Islam" and the like (Said, 1997: 28; see also Farmanfarmaian, 1992; Sidaway, 1998; McAlister, 2001).

As a consequence of this very different approach to international relations in the Middle East, subscribers to a relational conception of culture, instead of asking *what* makes the Middle Eastern international relations conflict-ridden, will ask *how* representations of the Middle East as an unstable "Arc of Crises"—to phrase Zbigniew Brezezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor—have made "the West" appear impressively peaceful, and made Western military engagement in this part of the world possible, necessary, and for the benefit of the people of the Middle East themselves.

Self-Conscious or Self-Centered?

> *Although Said's attempt to unearth the discursive character of the Other produces a significant breakthrough, it does not say much about the Oriental Other in itself. This is a result of Said's over-preoccupation with the discursive construction of the orient as an object of knowledge... [it] does not permit understanding of the Other in itself, in its own cultural and historical specificity.*
>
> (Keyman, 1997: 162–63)

Paradoxically, the intensive focus on the representer's role in the representation is both the strength and the weakness of this second attempt to "culturalize" the study of international relations. On the one hand, the relational approach is distinguished by its ability to acknowledge the important role of cultural diversity in international relations and by its distinct awareness of how representations are neither innocent nor ineffective. On the other hand, the advocates of this conception of culture appear to fall hostage to a number of problems that can be seen as an unintentional consequence of the self-consciousness they aim at. Hence, it is useful once again to return

to the two sorts of problems that often arise in connection with discussions of cultural diversity and the representation of Otherness.

Blindness to the Self

> *[This is] "a sociological theory of Disneyworld": a synthetic world inhabited by artificial creatures, including humans, constructed by humans. It postulates an all-powerful interpretation that creates what little reality it perceives…"subject" now not only equals "object," but is its moment of genesis, and the [object/subject] formula can now be rewritten as "subject = ß" were "ß = object" created by subject. The world, the reality, the cosmos itself just is as we say it.*
>
> (Wight, 1996: 302–03)

The reason why the problems concerning Blindness to the Self is also relevant in this connection is not due to any lack of awareness of the representer's place in representations of Otherness. Rather, the problem is to be found in the manner in which this issue is addressed. The thorough self-consciousness associated with the relational conception of culture is thus brought about by means of a radical constructivism, which, at least in its most outspoken versions, seems to replace a possibly naïve subject/object separation by an almost solipsistic subjectivism equivalent to Wight's "subject = ß" formula in the above. This radical constructivism is quite evident among IR's "dissident thoughts" and can also be recognized in statements by Said such as: "Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West" (1995: 22).

However, first does it make sense to perceive representation as part of either a construction of identities or of some kind of subtle performance of power, and, second, is it really possible to represent the Other at one's own discretion? With regard to the first question, the almost unambiguously negative and rather monolithic depiction of "Western" representations of the Middle East that can to be found among proponents of the relational conception of culture seems to some extent to be based on a rather problematic stereotyping, far from the more balanced accounts by, for instance, Rodinson (1974, 1987). By presenting the orientalist scholarship in a very stereotyped and caricatured way, Said, for instance, almost ends up doing to the orientalists what he accuses orientalist scholarship of having done to Middle Eastern societies (Brimnes, 2000). Furthermore, it is anything but obvious that representations produced as part of the performance of power must necessarily be regarded as unreliable and

without value as such. Halliday, among others, criticized this understanding and argued that the relationship between the origin and the validity of a discovery is more ambiguous than one might think: "the very fact of trying to subjugate a country would to some degree involve producing an accurate picture of it" (1995: 213).

Regarding the second question, advocates of the relational conception of culture easily leave the impression that the way the Other is represented almost exclusively depends on the representer while the represented appears more or less as an empty and passive object onto which all kinds of conceivable fantasies and ideas can be projected. However, Bhabha, for instance, suggested that instead of regarding the representation of Otherness as a "hegemonic monologue" where the Other is a passive object on which all thinkable fantasies and conceptions can be projected—such as it sometimes seems to be the case in the works of, for example, Said and Campbell—we might rather think of it as a hybrid dialogue, though seldom equal nor without power plays (Bhabha, 1997; Keyman, 1997; Brimnes, 2000). Furthermore, the representation of Otherness has often had far more ambiguous effects than what this approach's advocates usually would acknowledge. Sadiq al-Azm, for example, coined therefore the notion of "Orientalism in reverse." Here, the classic essentialist and problematic Orient/Occident discourse allegedly used to legitimize imperialism is reversed and applied to the struggle for an end of foreign interference. In the Middle Eastern context, this is visible in Arab Nationalism, as well as among radical Islamist movements, in which the criticism of foreign (in)direct influence is often based on the argument of an allegedly unique Islamic or Arab culture (Azm, 2000).

When advocates of the relational conception of culture seek to counter the prevailing lack of *self-consciousness* within the universalist IR mainstream, as well as among proponents of the essentialist conception, it thus seems that they unintentionally have turned into what most of all appears as a narcissist *self-centeredness*. Apparently they lack enough concern for how the representation of Otherness is not only about the representer's projections, desires, fantasies, and so on. This kind of (over)reaction also seems to influence their ability to relate to Otherness in a more substantial way.

Blindness to the Other

> *There were—and are—cultures and nations whose location is in the East . . . about that fact this study of Orientalism has very little to contribute, except to acknowledge it tacitly.*
>
> (Said, 1995: 5)

As mentioned before, the relational perspective is a critique of both the neglect of the issue of Otherness by the IR mainstream and the way in which proponents of an essentialist approach relate to the Other. For this reason, it would be natural to assume that proponents of this second attempt to "culturalize" the study of international relations would be particularly keen to address the question of how to acknowledge cultural diversity without committing the sins of orientalism. Indeed, this is also what Said is stressing in the introduction to *Orientalism*:

> The most important task of all would be to undertake studies in contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or nonrepressive and non-manipulative perspective. (1995: 24)

However, he then goes on to add that "these are all tasks left embarrassingly incomplete in this study" (Said, 1995: 24). Looking at other analyses based on a relational conception of culture, it becomes apparent that the latter remark is very telling for this kind of understanding of culture as a whole (e.g. Doty, 1993: 315).

Despite a blank rejection of the universalism of IR mainstream and, at least in principle, a recognition of the existence of different Others who are not only projections of own fantasies and desires, in practice, proponents of this alternative approach nonetheless usually leave the question of how to address and approach the actual cultural Other unanswered. This might very well be an unintended outcome of the previously mentioned radical constructivism associated with this approach. Thus, by stressing how the representation of the Other is intimately related to the construction of identities or a subtle way of performing power, one risks being caught in a kind of epistemological and moral crisis, characterized by a nagging doubt about whether it really is possible to gain any knowledge of Others or if we are just projecting our own fantasies, and by a pronounced fear that our representations are silencing voices so that we unwittingly are taking part in a subtle performance of power (Hastrup, 1992: 54). In merely dealing with the relationship between the representer and his representations, these dilemmas can be "avoided." However, at the same time one writes off the opportunity to relate to cultural diversity as anything but discursive products of one's own fantasies and projections. This is precisely the critique that supporters of the relational understanding of culture have been facing. From this perspective, it appears less surprising that Said has had so much more to offer on the

dynamics of Western representations of the Middle East than on real alternatives to the orientalist depiction of the region.

Unfortunately, this second bid for a culturalistic approach to the study of international relations is not only aligned with a number of very welcome critical qualities that may enrich the study of international relations. It is also related to a problematic tendency to overreact when it comes to addressing the prevalent *Blindness to the Self* within IR mainstream and among subscribers to the essentialist conception of culture. Thus, aspirations of promoting a larger *self-consciousness* in the study of international relation end up becoming *self-centeredness*, just as the attempt to promote a larger *sensitivity* toward the Other in reality becomes *oversensitivity* to saying anything substantial when it comes to actual Other. This is problematic, partly because we are left without any real idea as to how to approach actual Middle Eastern international relations rather than Western representations of these; and partly because there is the risk of losing sight of the material and very concrete consequences that specific representations may engender (Krishna, 1993). Also, the proponents of this second "culturalistic" alternative seem to be better at asking important and critical questions than at offering attractive answers.

Caught Between the Culture-Blind Scylla and the Culture-Blinded Charybdis?

> *It is one thing to say simply that we must escape the parochial, cease being ethnocentric, and be open to other civilizations. This can be a misleadingly seductive rhetoric. After all, the pitfalls of relativism or eclecticism are always waiting for the critics of a presumed universal reason. It is quite another thing to come to terms with the full implications of what sensitivity to other civilizations might mean for social and political theory as we know it.*
>
> (Walker, 1984: 7–8)

This enquiry into the current debate on the role of culture in IR reveals that neither IR nor international relations are as culture blank as supposed. Moreover, the individual position taken in this rather theoretical debate might have wide-ranging implications for which kind of images one will produce of the Middle East in general and the supposedly conflict-prone character of the region in particular.

In addition—as anticipated by Walker long before the current IR debate—this study discovered a large number of pitfalls with which an essentially contested concept such as culture is coupled. Thus the two

abovementioned "culturalistic" approaches seemingly have "solved" the problematic neglect of cultural diversity by introducing a new kind of problem. Instead of being blind to culture, their exaggerated focus on culture makes them almost *blinded by culture*. In other words, the essentialist approach appears blinded by a conception of the absolute cultural difference of the Other, while the relational approach seems blinded by a too extensive focus on the representer's own culturally specificity.

If the alternative to the current culture-blind universalism is a not less problematic culture-blinded particularism, it might be tempting to argue that the hitherto neglect of culture by IR in the end has been quite reasonable. Before accepting this very modest and truly pragmatic "solution" to the problem of culture, it might, however, be relevant to consult some of those disciplines that have long experienced the challenges of culture contrary to IR. While the pitfalls of culture are by no means foreign to these disciplines, cultural issues have not been rejected for this reason. On the contrary, the challenges of culture have explicitly been addressed and suggestions have been proposed as to how to steer clear of the culture-blind Scylla without embracing the culture-blinded Charybdis. This applies, for instance, to Middle East Area Studies, where the challenges of cultural diversity have long been a very contested issue on the agenda. While culture blind(ed)ness is also prevalent within (parts of) Middle East Area Studies, particularly in recent years a number of studies of interest have appeared. Some of these are of a more metatheoretical nature, as goes for Halliday's suggestion of combining "an analytical universalism with a historical particularism" (1995; see also Bromley, 1994). Others are more theoretically focused, for instance Barnett (1998), Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (2002), Lynch (1999), Telhami and Barnett (2002), and Gause (1999). Here, insights are drawn from IR theory as well as Middle Eastern Studies.[10]

Instead of abandoning the question of cultural diversity all together once again, both IR and the study of Middle Eastern relations might be better served by the building of new disciplinary bridges to some of those disciplines that have long been facing the challenges of culture, among others the various Area Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, and Cultural Studies.[11]

Notes

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2. In the following the term "IR" refers to the academic discipline of International Relations, while "international relations" refers to actual international relations.
3. In the following, focus is only on culture in its *differential* sense—where culture always will be collective and refer to something dividing social groups from each other—and not in its *generic* sense, where it is associated with the Enlightenment vision of *one* common human Culture. As culture belongs to the group of "essentially contested concepts" as noted by Geertz (1993: 29), and such concepts are often connected to "endless disputes about their proper use" (Gallie, 1956: 169) the aim of the following is not to offer a final definition of culture, which the more than hundred attempts to define culture indicate is a futile mission. Instead a number of different conceptions of culture will be identified and their various consequences for the study of international relations examined. For a further discussions of various dimensions of culture see for instance: Bauman (1999), Williams (1976), Geertz (1993), and Mulhern (2000). On "essentially contested concepts" see Gallie (1956) and Connolly (1993).
4. Jetschke and Liese (1998); Weldes (1999), Weldes et al. (1999), Lapid and Kratochwil (1996), Krause (1999), Katzenstein (1996), Huntington (1997), Avruch (1998), Jahn (2000), Berdal-Jacquin et al. (1998), and Senghaas (2001).
5. While many IR textbooks distinguish such three traditions or "paradigms" within IR, the labeling differs. What in the following is termed "Liberalism" is sometimes also labeled "Pluralism" and "Globalism" sometimes also goes under such labels as "Marxism," "Structuralism," or "Radicalism." Furthermore it is worth mentioning that the depiction of IR in terms of a number of "Great Debates" and two or three major schools has met rising criticism, particularly in recent years, see for example Smith (1995).
6. "The English School" and "The Copenhagen School" belong to the few exceptions. Though it is still rare to find national or regional distinctions within the IR debate, there has been a growing interest in this issue during recent years; see for instance Brown (2001), Chan (1993, 1994), Groom (1994), Jørgensen (2000), and Wæver (1998).

7. At first hand this criticism might be of less relevance to the tradition of Globalism, which in its Dependency-theory variant to a large degree is formulated by Latin American scholars based on experiences from this region. Nevertheless part of the criticism still seems valid, as it is also possible to identify here a similar tendency to universalize experiences from a certain time and space, in this case from Latin America.
8. Bozeman belongs to the very small group of IR scholars who for years have called for a less culture-blind study of international relations (1971, 1979, 1984, 1992, 1994) and Huntington belongs to one of the key figures in the more recent culture debate (Huntington, 1993, 1997).
9. The following reading is based on Hunter (1997), Piscatori (1984, 1986, 1992), and Valbjørn (2001).
10. For a discussion of some of these recent studies that to different degrees are based on a kind of bridging between IR and Middle East Studies, see Valbjørn (2003, 2004).
11. On further discussions on the bridging of IR and Post-Colonial Studies see Darby and Paolini (1994) and Darby (1998); on IR and Area Studies see Tessler (1999) and Valbjørn (2003).

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Chapter 3



Reinterpreting History: Perceptions of Nazism in Egyptian Media

Götz Nordbruch

Introduction

Since the beginning of the early 1990s, National Socialism has increasingly attracted interest within the Arab public. While before, authors and intellectuals nearly entirely avoided addressing the topic—rejecting any relation between the Arab world and the German crimes of Nazism—this void has been filled in the past few years. Several incidents, for instance the planned visit of Yasir Arafat to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington in 1998, triggered controversial reactions in Arab media, in which National Socialism and its crimes were referred to. During the last few years, intellectuals like Edward Said and Hazem Saghiyeh have repeatedly questioned the avoidance of the subject and, instead, asked the Arab public to recognize the Holocaust as an extra-ordinary crime against humanity. However, charges of an Israeli distortion and mystification of National Socialist history and its use for blackmailing the world public remain widespread.[1] Various arguments from Holocaust deniers like the British historian David Irving and the French professor Robert Faurisson are still commonly articulated. Recent translations of the so-called *Leuchter-Report* or the book *Did Six Million Really Die?* in which the Holocaust is flatly rebuked, continue to be distributed by renowned editors. The first Arab translation of Norman Finkelstein's

controversial book *The Holocaust Industry* was marketed in Beirut and Cairo even before a German translation hit the bookshops.

The increasing importance of National Socialism as a common issue in Arab media during recent years cannot be said to be an expression of genuine historical interest in its ideology or politics. There are almost no publications penned by Arab authors available referring to this distinct period of modern German history. With few exceptions, neither the central racial theory nor the expansionist foreign policies—both obviously touching the Middle East and its inhabitants—has been discussed in historical, political, or philosophical research.[2] Instead, the handling of Nazi politics and its basic ideological components has widely been restricted to publications that are essentially related to the ongoing conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The recent wave of anti-Israeli polemics placed Nazism at the center of various articles published in the last few years.[3] However, the importance of the Holocaust as a cornerstone for the international legitimacy of the state of Israel has compelled Arab authors and politicians to reconsider their long neglect. Despite the widespread questioning of the historical reality of German crimes against European Jews, several authors have realized the discursive value of Nazism for their own cause. As an outstanding point of historical reference for demands of international support and intervention, the recognition of German racial and anti-Semitic persecution allows parallels and comparisons with an assumed historical precedent to be drawn. Therefore, Nazism has become a multifunctional cipher within Arab public discourses for attacks on Israel during the last years.[4]

However, recent debates about Nazism cannot be reduced to this immediate usefulness within anti-Israeli polemics. Just like the increasing articulation of anti-Jewish sentiments in articles, caricatures, theater, and songs, Holocaust denial in an Arab context still tends to be explained as an instrument to delegitimize the state of Israel. Even in academic literature in which the dissemination of anti-Semitic expressions in Arab countries is analyzed, these views are often considered as functional tools on the battlefield for international legitimacy. The essence of this widespread assumption is exemplified in the words of Bernard Lewis. Having explored the historical developments of anti-Semitism in Arab countries, he concludes:

> [I]f the leaders of the Arab states could convince themselves to follow the example of Sadat and to undertake a dialogue with Israel . . ., we might expect the anti-Semitic campaigns to lose their vigor and [they would] finish, like in the Occident, with not being more than a feature of marginalized groups and extremist regimes. (Lewis, 1987: 340)

With the following focus on three central controversies, this chapter reconsiders this assumption of a causative link between the Arab–Israeli conflict and the controversies about the Holocaust and Nazism. Far from being instrumentally applied arguments forwarded within anti-Israeli polemics, the representation of the Holocaust in Arab public discourses mirrors specific perceptions of society, politics, and social conflicts. Similar to implied negative images of the Jews, these interpretations are neither limited to reflections on the Holocaust, nor to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Instead, the search for conspiracies and negative depictions of Jews has been documented as common patterns within numerous contemporary Arab public discourses.[5]

The following pages refer to three major debates in which authors and commentators from various political and religious spectra have been attracted to comment on Nazism and the Holocaust. Beginning with the euphoric public perception of the French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy and his publication *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics* in 1996, light will be shed on the controversy evolving around the international conference "Revisionism and Zionism," originally scheduled to convene in Beirut in March 2001. The analysis of articles published in support of comparisons between Nazism and Zionism preceding and following the UN Conference against Racism in Durban in August 2001 will finally consider most recent sources articulating common approaches to Nazi history in the Arab public.

This analysis is based on sources from the Egyptian public. While all debates addressed in this chapter were echoed in most Arab countries, the consulted key texts are limited to Egyptian publications. Considering the relative freedom of press and the variety of newspapers and magazines, Egyptian media is a reliable source for conclusions about public sentiments and interpretations. However, despite this focus on debates in Egypt, the outcome of this study is not limited to discourses in the Egyptian public. Notwithstanding the increase of concurring Arab media, be it newspapers, radio, or television, the importance of Egyptian media in forming and mirroring public opinion in other Arab-speaking countries remains unchallenged.

Addressing Nazism in Egyptian Media

The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics: Uncovering Conspiracies

Following its release in France in December 1995, Roger Garaudy's *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics* became one of the most

extensively covered subjects in Egyptian media during the following two years. Beginning with interviews in Spring 1996 and ending with public rallies and gatherings in support of him in the face of charges of Holocaust denial in a Paris court in February 1998, hundreds of articles were published about his theses and the trial. Today, more than six Arabic translations are available, of which one, published by the well-known Egyptian editor Dar al-Shuruq, is in its fourth edition.

In his discussions of assumed myths created by the Zionist movement, Garaudy directs his main argument at the accounts of Nazi German history. In addition to his questioning of the existence of gas chambers and of the number of Jewish victims during the Holocaust, his central arguments reflect charges of distortion and mystification of Nazi history in Zionist and Israeli narratives. In his view, the Zionists' aim to enforce the Jewish emigration from Europe to Palestine made them a driving force within the persecution of Jews under the Nazis. After the foundation of Israel in 1948, this Zionist–Nazi collaboration was covered up by means of Jewish influence in international media. Instead of rendering visible the participation of Zionism in German crimes, Garaudy suggests that Zionism exploited the crimes to legitimize both the establishment of Israel as well as its policies against Arabs and Palestinians in the following decades.

Only weeks after the release of the book and the announcement of charges of anti-Semitic incitement according to French law, first interviews with Garaudy and articles about his accounts appeared in Arab newspapers. Known for his earlier writings on Marxism and especially on Islam, the former high-ranking member of the French Communist party, who converted to Islam in the early 1980s, enjoyed considerable popularity among the Arab public. In the following months, Garaudy toured several countries in the Middle East, among them Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, and gave various lectures about his book and the charges and proceedings against him. The huge public interest in his theses finally allowed an overwhelming welcome at a lecture during the International Cairo Book Fair in February 1998. Only days before the Paris court handed down its verdict against him, popular support included rallies, protest letters by institutions like the Palestinian Writers' Association, and donations to help finance his court case.

The legal procedures based on his book finally added to the interest triggered by his doubts about the historical truth of Nazism. Attacking Zionism and "the 95 per cent Zionist dominated media" for the charges leveled against him, Garaudy was perceived as the latest victim of Jewish influence in media and politics. Although most

reviews and reports combined the questioning of the existence of gas chambers with charges of Zionist–Nazi collaboration, a particular focus was placed on alleged Zionist lobbies' pressure on the French authorities and on "the Zionist control of world media." The overwhelming majority of articles reflected an outspokenly supportive stand of Garaudy and his work. Garaudy's revelations about the "myths" and his elaboration about Zionist involvement in Nazi crimes were taken for granted. Respected academics like the historian Muhammad Hassanin Haikal and religious authorities like the sheikh of al-Azhar, Muhammad Said Tantawi, openly welcomed his stand against Zionism and Israel. In his preface for the Dar al-Shuruq edition of *The Founding Myths*, Haikal adopted a widely shared stance toward the theses and their background. Introducing the book as an academic examination of the history of Zionism, *The Founding Myths* is presented as a continuation of supposedly serious historical research conducted by fellow historians like Douglas Reed and David Irving. While Reed's book *Far and Wide*, which was published at the end of the 1940s, questioned the number of Jewish victims, Irving's works mainly focused on the persecution policy as such. Denying any anti-Semitic implication of Nazi ideology, Irving finally doubts the use of gas chambers in concentration camps. Ending his introduction with references to public debates sparked by Reed and Irving, as well as Garaudy, Haikal expresses his admiration for Garaudy's readiness "to confront the Zionist power," especially as he knows about the dangers this might have.[6]

Despite Haikal's reputation and the prominent place in which his introduction was published, Muhammad Salmawy contributed the most outstanding example within the public receptions of *The Founding Myths*. The editor-in-chief of the French language *al-Ahram Hebdo* and personal aide of Nobel Prize winner Nagib Mahfus offered an interpretation of the ongoing lawsuit against Garaudy, which echoed commonly held views in the Egyptian public.[7] In his article, which he entitled "Cherchez Les Juifs!" Salmawy addresses three issues of concern at the time of its publication in February 1998.[8] In addition to alluding to the fate of Garaudy, Salmawy refers both to legal restrictions enforced by a number of countries against David Irving and the Monica Lewinsky case in the United States. He opens his article with the following:

> The American President Bill Clinton is subjected to interrogations in the US for his relations with women, while [at the same time] the proceedings against the French thinker Roger Garaudy progress in Paris

> and the British historian David Irving is expelled from Austria, Italy, Germany, Canada and the countries of the Commonwealth. Three incidents which might seem unconnected, but which bring to mind the famous word attributed to Napoleon: Cherchez la femme! This time [however,] it seems that—if we want to understand what is going on around us—we have to raise the catchphrase: Cherchez les juifs!

In the following exposé of the three incidents, what he assumes to be their background is revealed. Beginning with the investigations against Clinton, Salmawy associates the public affair about the White House intern Monica Lewinsky with the expected visit of the then Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington: The affair "began at a time when the White House was prepared to put some pressure on the Israeli visitor Benjamin Netanyahu to moderate his grip on the occupied Arab lands [in an attempt] to prevent the explosion of the situation." The implied allusion to an intended plot imposed by pro-Israeli forces, which attempted to undermine the standing and reputation of President Clinton by dragging him into a public scandal, is finally stressed by the assumption that Lewinsky had publicly justified "her admiration for Clinton with his pro-Israeli politics." In the meantime, Salmawy continues, the legal suit against Garaudy in Paris debunks France's reputation as the land of freedom. Referring to the *Loi Gayssot* that was passed in 1990 by the National Assembly against the growing number of publications inciting anti-Semitism and denial of the Holocaust, Salmawy claims that the legal measures taken against outspokenly calling into doubt crimes committed against humanity define "humanity not as the entire human race, but instead as the six million Jews who are said to have been exterminated under Hitler's Nazi rule in Europe during the last world war." The only crime Garaudy committed, Salmawy goes on, is to express doubts about the actual number of Jewish victims in the Holocaust. With only four million Jews living in Europe at the time in question, the number of six million Jews killed at the hand of the Nazis begs proof. In addition, Salmawy repeats Garaudy's insistence on the impossibility of the use of gas chambers for the killing of people: "The idea itself [Garaudy says] is impossible from a technical point of view. Till now, no one had explained how these alleged ovens had been used." Despite his reputation and his participation in the resistance against the German occupation of France, then, Garaudy has become a victim of a public fury leveled by Jewish groups against him and his supporters.

However, Salmawy insists that these campaigns are not without precedent. According to him, the example of David Irving, whose

latest work about Joseph Goebbels was rejected by most publishing houses, renders visible similar campaigns against historians questioning the capacity of the gas chambers and Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic policies. In his view, the travel restrictions imposed on Irving as a result of his participation in and contributions to international gatherings of the extreme Right in Europe, the United States, and Canada are similar attempts to undermine historical research. Salmawy's explanatory linkage of the mentioned incidents becomes obvious in his rhetorical closing:

> Finally, what is the common denominator between what Clinton was exposed to in America and what people like Garaudy and David Irving encounter in Europe? Is it really the woman that Napoleon was looking for? Or is it something less beautiful then the woman, yet [instead] more destructive?

The relevance of this article as an example of common perceptions of Nazism, as expressed in the debate on Garaudy, is not so much due to the choice of aspects of Nazi history that are discussed here. Similar to most commentators, Salmawy was eager to restrict his presentation to reproductions of theses forwarded by Garaudy. In a later column published in defense of his views, he insisted on the descriptive character of his presentation and vehemently rejected charges of supporting Garaudy and Irving. Notwithstanding these rhetorical turns suggesting a neutral position within the controversy, the underlying perception of social reality forwarded by Salmawy is important. The assumption of a hidden hand projecting, legislating, and enforcing laws in Europe and the United States as well as controlling public opinion through media and book markets echoes widespread theories of conspiracy. His "exposure" of these conspiracies leaves no doubt as to their origins. While most authors formally restrict their accusations to Israel or Zionism, Salmawy outspokenly identifies the hidden power as lying with "the Jews." Both world media and world politics are thus interpreted as being steered by Jewish forces using all available means to implement their goals.

This account mirrors one of the main approaches to Nazism as expressed in the reactions to *The Founding Myths* in the Egyptian public. Far from being a matter of academic interest, most authors refrained from expressly blessing the historical validity of Garaudy's theses. However, the extensive and uncommented quotes from his books or lectures leave no doubt about the authors' attitudes. In a mixture of rising doubts about the official historical narrative and the

purported exposure of a hidden plan implemented by Zionism, these views take up widespread perceptions of other social issues in contemporary Egyptian society. As an example of an elaboration on the conspiracy notion, *The Founding Myths* with its representation of Nazi history is finally adopted by the public as a common approach to society in terms of hidden forces, plots, and secret campaigns against the Egyptian community.

The Beirut Conference on "Revisionism and Zionism": Questioning Memory

The announcement of a conference in Lebanon organized by the U.S.-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR) and the Swiss organization Vérité et Justice brought the public interest in Nazism to another peak. Calling for a revision of Nazi history and especially the Holocaust—the "key propaganda tool of Israeli-Zionist interests" as the conference announcement claimed—the organizers openly attempted to reach out for Arab solidarity in their allegedly shared struggle.[9] The events around the conference, which was scheduled to convene under the motto "Revisionism and Zionism" in March 2001 in Beirut, were widely covered in both local and international media. First reports revealing the connection of the conference and its organizers to international circles of the extreme Right triggered protest from the United States, Europe, and Israel, which fueled further debate in the Arab public. Despite the cancellation by the Lebanese Council of Ministers a few days before the gathering, the controversy about the conference and its ban offered a forum to discuss the organizers' aims and their relevance for the Arab world. As an outstanding attempt to approach the Arab–Islamic public, the conference reflected the ongoing discussions within the Western Right about their relationship to Islam and Arab movements of resistance.[10] The readiness of editors in the Arab–Islamic world to translate and publish their works further encouraged these approaches. Anticipating shared interest in the conference, one of the organizers of the conference, the Swiss national Juergen Graf, who reportedly was granted residence in Iran after being sentenced to prison in Switzerland, insisted that those "who are constantly lying about 'gas chambers' and 'six million' are the same ones who relentlessly vilify Iran and the Islamic revolution. They are, incidentally, the same people who propagate abortion, gay rights (...), hard-core pornography, and similar abominations" (Graf, 2001).

In an open letter to the Lebanese government, 14 Arab intellectuals questioned these approaches and expressed their objection to the

conference. The signatories, including Adonis, Mahmud Darwish, and Edward Said, strongly opposed the offer of support from Western extreme Right in their struggle with Israel.[11] However, these critics encountered harsh public reactions. Perceived as a refusal to uncover alleged Zionist myths, charges of betrayal of the Arab cause and submission to, even collaboration with, the enemy were common accusations leveled against both the signatories and the Lebanese government.

Since the beginning of April, the Egyptian literary weekly *Akhbar al-Adab* opened its pages for a continuing debate and published a series of articles. Announced as a "Holocaust dialogue," the events of the failed Beirut conference formed the main background to the initiated discussion. However, related incidents encouraged further contributions. The cancellation of an invitation to Tvetzan Todorov, the director of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris, who was expected to present a lecture on public memory at the French department of Ain Shams University/Cairo at the beginning of April 2001, became a local link to the controversies. The French department reportedly decided to cancel the lecture after having learnt about a manuscript in which Todorov elaborated on the Holocaust as a specific crime against Jews.

In a comprehensive report, Azzat al-Qamhawi related the decision of the French department to the banning of the conference in Beirut. In his article, which he entitled "The Holocaust Happened and Happens," al-Qamhawi vehemently objects to the aims of those supporting the Beirut conference while questioning the decision of the French department.[12] In his view, it "is not in the interest of the Arabs in their struggle with Israel to deal with the question of whether Hitler incinerated the Jews or not, especially not in these days during which the Palestinian people is exposed to a war of elimination." Instead, if there is any interest in this issue, it should rather be "to prove than to deny the Holocaust, because to prove (the truth about the Holocaust) means to expound the Zionist savageness and the bias of the West." Rejecting the potential damage of being linked to the Western Right and their apology of Nazism, al-Qamhawi considers the importance of the Holocaust as part of the "European conscience." Criticizing Todorov's differentiation between the Holocaust and other genocides and especially the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, al-Qamhawi justifies dealing with the Holocaust as a potential argument to legitimize the Palestinian cause.

In his weekly column, the author and editor of *Akhbar al-Adab* Gamal al-Ghitani speaks in favor of a similar approach to the Holocaust and expresses his support for the positions taken by the signatories of

the open letter.[13] Doubting the relevance of the questions addressed by the Beirut conference, he considers the experience of the Nazi Holocaust against the "Jews, Gypsies, Russians, and against Arabs" as an opportunity to gain international support for ending "the contemporary Holocaust" against the Palestinians:

> No Arab has anything to do with the crimes that happened to the Jews at the hands of European Nazis. [Instead], the Palestinians and the Arabs are the victims of the Zionist Holocaust in which the Arab people in Palestine is being exterminated.

In the following editions of the paper, harsh criticism of these positions was articulated. While Said al-Bahrawi, a member of the Freedom Committee of the Egyptian Writers Union, rejected the banning of the conference "in the light of the right to freedom of opinion," he welcomed the resistance of the French department to the attempt "of imposing" this issue on the Arabs.[14] In a similar way, the Syrian author Ghazi Abu Aql claimed that Zionist propaganda had divided the people into "believers in the Holocaust and infidels."[15] In his view, liberal Arab intellectuals increasingly tend to surrender to the imposed belief in the Holocaust. The assumed impact of Zionist propaganda on the historical narrative of Nazism was further stressed by Ala Abd al-Wahab. Without doubting the crimes as such, he argues that a "Zionist-Nazi cooperation produced the Holocaust."[16] Thus, the main intention of Zionism after 1945 not only entailed the construction of a myth of persecution, but also the creation of an image, in which Nazism and Zionism figured as hostile opposites. In contrast to this narrative, Abd al-Wahab argued, Zionism contributed to the persecutions of the Jews not only practically, but also by sharing basic ideological components of Nazism and its racial theories. Following this argument, the discussion about the Holocaust should not only remember the contemporary "Zionist Holocaust," but should also point out the historical connections between Nazism and Zionism.

Akhbar al-Adab continued the controversy by publishing al-Qamhawi's reply to his critics, in which he repeated his comments, not without proving his hostility to Israel by opening his article with the line of the popular song "I hate Israel."[17] The publication of a translated article written by Robert Faurisson finally opened the forum to scheduled participants of the Beirut conference. While Faurisson's article overviewed the situation of Holocaust denial in Europe and the United States, the reprint of a critical open letter of the director of the IHR, Mark Weber, to the Lebanese poet Adonis further stressed

the positions in support of the Beirut conference. In his weekly column, Ahmad al-Khamisi introduced this letter with a short portrait in favor of the IHR and its activities. Weber's charges against Adonis and the signatories of the letter against the conference, whom he described as traitors, not only of the Arab and Palestinian cause, but also of those searching for historical truth, are deliberately adopted by al-Khamisi.

The controversial debate evolving around the Holocaust denier conference in Beirut, which is mirrored in these articles, addressed the question of remembrance and memory of Nazism. Interestingly, despite seemingly conflicting stances toward the conferences, all authors depicted the Israeli occupation as a repetition of the Nazi Holocaust. Openly drawing on the importance of the Holocaust within public controversies and its implied connotations for international politics, obvious differences between Nazism and Zionism or Israeli politics are leveled. While Nazism in these views appears to represent a form of racist occupation, Zionism is described as pursuing a "war of elimination." The conflicting views as represented by al-Qamhawi on the one hand and al-Khamisi on the other hand seem thus to be limited to pragmatic reasoning within the framework of political opportunities. In this regard, Nazism is reduced to an image whose implied historical, moral, and political added value is applied within the context of the Arab–Israel confrontation.

The resemblance of these views to those articulated by the extreme Right is not merely a formal one. The references, which were knowingly put forward by *Akhbar al-Adab*, reflect shared approaches to German history. While authors like Bahrawi justified their criticism of the ban in Beirut as a matter of freedom of opinion, the uncommented reproduction of contributions by Faurisson and Weber puts these justifications into question. Arguments like those applied by Ghitani against the questioning of the numbers of Jewish victims further render visible the dubious impact of these approaches. Claiming that "there is no difference between the elimination of one man, a million or more,"[18] the assumed recognition of the Holocaust finally implies a reinterpretation of Nazism as a regrettable, but unspecific crime.

UN Conference against Racism in Durban: Fighting the "New Nazis"

The preparations for the UN Conference against Racism in Durban offered the most recent forum for numerous accounts of Nazi history and the Holocaust in the Arab public. Trying to revive the revoked resolution passed by the UN General Assembly in 1975, which

referred to Zionism as a form of racial discrimination, the preparatory meetings of Arab NGOs and the accompanying media reports widely described Israel as a historical heir of Nazism and its crimes. Since the beginning of the second Intifada in fall 2000, these depictions have increasingly been adopted in the media. Common accusations of "ethnic cleansing," "genocide," and a "politics of racial superiority" toward the Palestinians made against the Israelis reflect these comparisons of Israeli politics with Nazi policy and ideology. The preceding meetings and controversies about the Durban conference thus highlighted an ongoing discussion in the Arab public. While the depiction of Jews or Israelis with Swastikas has long been a common motif in cartoons, several authors tried to solidify these charges with extensive explanations of alleged ideological similarities and replications. These arguments were taken up in comparisons between Nazism and Zionism in speeches and handouts delivered at the NGO conference. Similar to charges of racism and apartheid, these interpretations of Zionism and Israeli politics as a replica of Nazism can be traced back to earlier controversies.

The account of the Egyptian intellectual Abd al-Wahab al-Missiri can be considered as one of the main contributions to this argument. His nomination as a member of the Egyptian delegation to the NGO summit in Durban mirrors the relevance of his approaches. In his book *Zionism, Nazism and the End of History*, which was first published in 1997, he attempts to prove substantial ideological parallels between Nazism and Zionism. As both were of modern Western origin, in his view, the alleged parallels can be traced back to the ambivalences of enlightenment and the increasing secularization of modern Western thought (al-Missiri, 1997a). Al-Missiri concludes that the crimes of Nazism reflect immanent tendencies of a Western "civilization of extermination" (al-Missiri, 1997b: 45). Consequently, anti-Jewish persecution and the Holocaust in particular are expressions of modern Western thought. As a historical example of these tendencies, the German crimes against Jews are considered to be a precedent for Israeli policies toward the Palestinians.

Earlier, a series of similar arguments, which culminated in the weeks before the gathering in Durban, was triggered by an earlier depiction of Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Nazi uniform on the cover of the Nasserist weekly *al-Arabi*.[19] The reactions in Israel and the reports in international media about the fabricated photo and its sensational side-text "The Nazi" prompted various articles in support of this comparison. Following a similar illustration in which Sharon and Peres were depicted as mere masked copies of

Adolf Hitler, several intellectuals interviewed justified the depiction as historically appropriate. However, Muhammad Awda felt obliged to object to the implied historical order. Pointing to alleged racist thoughts in the Torah and the Zionist definition of Jews, these views were said to predate the development of Nazi ideology and the foundation of its party in 1919.[20] Ibrahim Abd al-Madjid further specified ideological nuances in both movements. With Hitler and his fellow Nazis suffering from the Treaty of Versailles and the losses inflicted on the Germans due to their defeat in the First World War, Nazi ideology echoed popular demands for revenge and the reestablishment of former German borders. With reference to Israel, however, he states:

> [It] emerged half a century ago and inflicts the same Nazi deeds on a people that has not fought her before. It did not deport and did not suppress them during all of history. Israel practices [this politics towards the Palestinians] without the old trauma, which Hitler bore and never overcame. (. . .) Peres has no trauma similar to that of Hitler, but he committed and commits more ugly acts against the Arabs than the Nazis did against the Jews. Hitler, then, is nothing but "a minor student in the Israeli school of terror and racism."[21]

With additional charges concerning the allegedly more than five million victims of the ongoing "Zionist Holocaust," Gamal Fahmi finally concludes that if anyone should complain about the comparison between Peres and Hitler, "no doubt, the Nazi is the one who is unjustly treated."[22]

The Arab regional preparatory meeting for the Durban conference, which convened in July 2001 in Cairo, added to these approaches. Extensive expositions about the religious foundations of Zionism and its allegedly racist roots in concepts like "the Chosen People" and "the Promised Land" were central arguments raised in an attempt to justify the comparison of Zionism with South African Apartheid and Nazism.[23] Despite the language adopted in the formal declarations, in which charges against Israel were increasingly "reduced" to politics of Apartheid, assumptions that there is a Nazi character to Zionist ideology and Israeli politics remained omnipresent. With Muhammad Sawi speaking of Nazism and Zionism "as advanced stages of Western civilization's barbarism and savageness within its global colonial project,"[24] implied anti-Western criticism further increased with the announcement of American and European opposition against an inclusion of similar statements in the final declaration.

Allusions to Nazism and anti-Semitic crimes with reference to the situation in the Palestinian territories were finally augmented by

accusations of a previous Zionist involvement in Neo-Nazi crimes against Muslims and Arabs. In his attempt to prove the ideological parallels between these movements, al-Missiri concludes that the "difference between the Zionist and the anti-Semitic paradigms is not in their premises, terms, or logic or solutions, but rather in the mechanism for realizing that solution. In other words, the difference is purely mechanical rather then conceptual."[25] A small booklet with a collection of recently published caricatures from Egyptian newspapers, which was distributed at the summit by the Egyptian Arab Lawyers Union, illustrates this usage of Nazism and the Holocaust (Arab Lawyers Union, 2001).

In these approaches, again, Nazism serves as a cipher to denounce Zionism. The reduction of modern Western thought to Nazi ideology and the identification of Zionism as its most modern heir thus blurs any historical perspective. Within the context of the Durban conference and the confrontation between the United States and the European Union on the one hand and most Arab and Islamic states on the other hand, the depiction of "Nazi Israel" as a representative of a Western "civilization of elimination" justified the demands for international condemnation of Israel and its occupation policies.

Conclusion

Two years after the peak of repercussions, the spirit of Garaudy remains visible in the Arab media. Far from being an argument applied temporarily within the Arab–Israeli conflict, charges of mystification and distortion of Nazism and the Holocaust are articulated on a regular basis. Even though public figures have renewed their calls to the public to acknowledge the Holocaust as a historical fact, outspoken denial of the Holocaust continues to be widespread.

With this overview of three main controversies in which Nazism is referred to, the variety of potential arguments—ranging from outright denial to comparison—has become obvious. Offering an argumentative link, the debate on Garaudy allowed the long overdue neglect of Nazism in Egyptian public discourse to be surmounted. The perceptions having shifted from neglect to minimization, Nazism and its crimes have become a discursive element in public controversy.

These interpretations of Nazi history are obviously linked to views of post-Holocaust developments. General assumptions of conspiracies as major social and political forces are paralleled by accusations of ongoing distortion and mystification of relevant historical episodes

within hegemonic historical narratives. History and contemporary social and political developments are thus interpreted as plots designed to pursue particular political aims. The identification of Israel, Zionism, and finally the Jews as historical equivalents of Nazism adds the ultimate link within this argumentative complex.

Despite the variety of arguments put forward in the debates, the interrelation between the views articulated exemplarily becomes visible in shared images attributed to Jews. Highlighted in Salmawy's exclamation "*cherchez les juifs!*" references to "the Jews," "Zionism," and "Israel" function as synonyms. The application of anti-Jewish stereotypes within the discussions of Nazism and the Holocaust and especially post-Holocaust history is a striking characteristic of the analyzed controversies. The depiction of Jews as deceitful and conspiring can be identified as a common means of representation. However, these patterns of perception are not limited to controversies in which Nazi history is dealt with. Instead, theories of conspiracy and charges of Jewish plots are regular explanations for various social and political phenomena.

In his most recent writings, Edward Said illustrated the limits of these noticeable changes within Arab public perceptions of National Socialist history.[26] Being one of the few outspoken voices calling for an acknowledgment of the Holocaust as a specific crime against European Jews, Said repeatedly insisted on symbolical comparisons between the Holocaust and the Palestinian suffering under Israeli occupation. Similar to al-Missiri, whose acknowledgment of the Holocaust is based on the importance of Nazi crimes to illustrate the threats supposedly immanent in modern Western thought, Said's allusions to the Holocaust function as rhetorical means within his argumentation. National Socialism in general and the Holocaust in particular serve as historical precedents on which calls for international interventions, compensation claims, or demands for an international court similar to the Nuremberg trial for German war criminals can be based.

In this regard, the analyzed changes in and the variety of public perceptions of Nazism remain ambivalent. Despite an increasing readiness to acknowledge the impacts of the Holocaust, these perceptions tend to be instrumentalized within anti-Israeli arguments. As a fundamental source for the legitimization of Israeli politics, the Holocaust—and the claim that the Holocaust is being repeated in the Palestinian territories—is turned against the Israeli narrative. In these views, Palestinian demands are legitimate not *despite*, but *because* of the Holocaust.

Notes

1. Webman (1999), Saghiyeh and Bashir (1999), and Zimmer-Winkel (2000). See also: Saghiyeh (1997).
2. As an exception that discusses the impact of Nazi ideology among Arab intellectuals, see Atiyya (2000: 21 ff.).
3. See the chapter "The Holocaust. The Lie of the Mahraqa (Holocaust) and the Attempt to Burn Garaudy" in al-Ghiyati (1997: 63–75), the chapter "The Jews and Germany" in al-Tahiri (2001: 253–55), the chapter "Zola, Faurisson, Garaudy and the Zionist Judges of Investigation" in al-Dabagh (2000: 56–69), the chapter "The Holocaust: The Never-Ending Funeral Service" in Anayya (2001: 150–62) and Mahmud (2001).
4. Previous studies about the relationship between Nazism and the Arab world include Wild (1985) and Cao-Van-Hoa (1990).
5. Conspiracy theories in the Arab world have increasingly drawn the attention of Arab intellectuals who expressed concern about the negative impacts of these perceptions of society, see Hamzawy (2002). The existence of anti-Semitic stereotypes in Arab countries in general, and Egypt in particular, has been shown by various studies. However, most studies are limited to descriptive summaries of current images. An outstanding exception is Saghiyeh (2000). Saghiyeh traces back anti-Jewish thought to its foundations in nationalist ideologies. Cf. for other recently published studies Daif Allah (2001), Labib (1999), Abd al-Mu'ti (1999), and Khasan (2000).
6. Haikal (2000). An English translation is published in the right-wing magazine *The Journal for Historical Review*, 19/2000.
7. Salmawy's nomination for the *Grande Medaille de la Francophonie* of the *Academie Francaise* in 1998 was followed by protest from various organizations and institutions, and finally reversed.
8. *Al-Ahram*, February 2, 1998, and *al-Ahram Hebdo*, April 2, 1998.
9. IHR statement "Beirut Conference," December 24, 2000.
10. It is noteworthy that representatives of the Western extreme Right have been invited to several lectures and conferences of Islamist or radical Arab nationalist organizations. The leading member of the German neo-Nazi party NPD, Horst Mahler, as well the alleged ex-member of the U.S. Ku-Klux-Klan, David Duke, were two of the most outstanding lecturers who asked for Arab solidarity in their fight against the "Zionist Holocaust myth" (cf. Nordbruch, 2001).
11. *Le Monde*, March 15, 2001. However, signatories like Said and Darwish later publicly distanced themselves from the letter. Both Darwish and Said rejected the implied call to restrict freedom of expression. See Darwish's statement in an interview with the Lebanese TV channel LBC, printed in *al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya*, 48 (Fall 2001): 7–23.
12. *Akhbar al-Adab*, April 15, 2001.
13. *Akhbar al-Adab*, April 22, 2001.

14. Ibid.
15. *Akhbar al-Adab*, April 29, 2001.
16. *Akhbar al-Adab*, May 6, 2001.
17. *Akhbar al-Adab*, April 29, 2001.
18. *Akhbar al-Adab*, April 22, 2001.
19. *Al-Arabi*, April 29, 2001.
20. *Al-Arabi*, May 6, 2001.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. See, for example, Idris (2001).
24. *Al-Qahira*, August 28, 2001.
25. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, April 26, 2001.
26. Cf. *al-Ahram Weekly*, October 26, 2002.

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Chapter 4



Internationalization of Anti-Islamist Discourse and Creation of a Regional Antiterrorism Mechanism: The Initiative of Mubarak's Egypt

Jeong-Min Seo

Introduction

Islamist activism has been present in the Middle East from at least 1928 in the form of movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. These movements have over time been reinforced or radicalized in response to various historical events such as the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, the revolution in Iran in 1979, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. As the growing strength of Islamist groups has been interpreted as a serious threat to many Middle Eastern states, each regime has taken various measures ranging from physical crackdowns, ideological propaganda, and, less frequently, partial accommodation in order to contain the internal challenge. Particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Middle Eastern regimes, however, have showed a distinct anti-Islamist policy. The anti-Islamist discourses or narratives have gone beyond the boundary of domestic politics and have actively mobilized regional and international public opinion to build an "antiterrorism" mechanism.

Egypt, in particular, has been playing a central role in this expansion of anti-Islamist policy. Participating in and organizing regional and international antiterrorism gatherings and conferences, the Mubarak regime has made a great effort to manufacture a regional and international antiterrorism discourse and to construct a transnational cooperative system against terrorism. Thus, the central research questions of this study are:

(1) Why has the Egyptian regime been actively involved in the internationalization of anti-Islamist discourse and the creation of a regional antiterrorism mechanism?
(2) How have the top Egyptian officials manufactured the domestic, regional, and international antiterrorism discourse and constructed the transnational cooperative system?
(3) How can we explain the interrelationship between the two variables: the symbolic anti-Islamist discourse production on the domestic level and the actual initiatives in creating the antiterrorism mechanism on the regional or international level?

On the basis of these questions, this chapter proposes to examine how the issues of Islamist movements, national security, and globalization have been concocted into a symbolic representation of images and discourses in the Egyptian context.

In examining the internationalization process of anti-Islamist discourse and initiatives, this study proposes to adopt a thematic narrative analysis. A good starting point is to divide related political narratives into four thematic categories based on the above questions. Then, actual initiatives and policies are explored in order to link them with the political narratives. This approach will be helpful to understand the relationship between ideas and interests and between symbolic politics and existential actions. In this regard, speeches, statements, and interviews of the president and ministers of interior on Islamist movements will be analyzed to understand how the Egyptian regime has manufactured an anti-Islamist discourse on the domestic level and an antiterrorist environment on the international level. The analysis of the statements and speeches are conducted in terms of the following thematic categories:

(1) The reasons for the emergence and growth of the Islamist movements;
(2) The definition of Islamist movements;

(3) The consequence of Islamist violence and its negative effects on the nation, the region, and the world;
(4) The solutions suggested to the problems of the Islamist movements.

On the basis of the narrative analysis, the actual policies and practices of the Egyptian government toward the so-called external terrorist elements are explored. Various mechanisms have been established in order to cut the "connecting links" between Egyptian Islamist movements and foreign elements and to preempt a future "external infiltration." Thus, bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international security agreements and the consequent results, like extradition of Islamist elements, are examined. In addition to these agreements, other Egyptian efforts to host and participate in antiterrorism meetings and conferences are investigated. Through the examination of the anti-Islamist discourse and activities, this essay ultimately attempts to demonstrate that the Egyptian regime, as an "active" actor in the globalization process, has utilized a "globalization" trend during the 1990s to integrate Islamist activism and national security into regional and international dynamics.

Globalization and Internationalization of Antiterrorism

The development of globalization accelerated toward the end of the twentieth century. Worldwide links are emphasized in a description of globalization as a "process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions generating transcontinental or inter-regional flows and networks of activity" (Held et al., 1999: 16). However, critics have rightly pointed out that the term "globalization" is often used vaguely and inconsistently. At least five general usages of the term can be distinguished. For example, the term has often been taken to mean "internationalization," that is, an intensification of cross-border interactions and interdependence between countries. A second usage has treated globalization as "liberalization," a process of removing government-imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an open, integrated world economy. A third conception has viewed globalization in terms of "universalization," that is, the spread of various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the earth. Fourth, many people, mainly critics of cultural imperialism, have defined globalization as "westernization," especially in an

Americanized form. Still others have identified globalization as "deterritorialization," that is, a shift in geography whereby territorial places, territorial distances, and territorial borders lose some of their previously overriding influence.

These five conceptions overlap to some extent, but their respective emphases are significantly different. Thus, application of one of the five approaches to a certain study of global phenomena is contingent to the intention of a researcher or to a field of study. For example, someone who conducts research on global economic cooperation or conflicts of economic interests may follow the usage of the term in the sense of "liberalization." With this in mind, this study on building an international or regional antiterrorism mechanism between countries will adopt the first approach, "internationalization"; this chapter employs the notions "globalization" and "internationalization" interchangeably.

Another important consideration in the application of a certain approach would be the "perception" of a sample group of studies toward globalization. If we study the activities and ideologies of "anticapitalist movements," we are likely to adopt liberalization or Westernization approaches. In the same context, this study should consider how the Egyptian regime perceives the phenomenon of globalization in order to utilize it for the regime's internationalization policy of antiterrorism. Egypt, like other Third World countries, has showed skepticism toward being a part of a "globalized web of transborder networks" under the liberalization of the world economy, the universalization of certain norms or values, the Westernization of its society, and the deterritorialization of its sovereignty. Thus, many intellectuals and mass media sources have often criticized such phenomena as infiltration of Western values, transnational corporations, pan-Americanism, and the like. However, it can be said that the regime and other intellectuals have positively accepted globalization in terms of internationalization, that is, a process of intensifying connections between national domains. Various aspects and policies on international cooperation have been recognized as one of the important and vital boosters in Egypt's economy, security, and foreign relations. Furthermore, as we see in the following sections, the regional and international cooperation in the field of antiterrorism has been greatly emphasized, at least by government officials and pro-government intellectuals.

In addition to the abovementioned conceptual debate on "globalization," it is also important to point out how the globalization trend has been evaluated. Concerning its extent, depth, and consequences,

many discussions of globalization suffer from oversimplification, exaggeration, and wishful thinking. As a result, while some advocates have emphasized some rosy aspects of globalization, certain skeptics have gone to an opposite extreme and dismissed notions of globalization as a mythology (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 2). One of various points of controversy between advocates and skeptics of globalization and one of the most relevant issues to this study is the relation between hegemonic and peripheral powers. Many would agree that globalization seems to be weakening the power of individual countries to control their own destinies, that major decisions are increasingly made higher up, at a global level, and that the influence of national governments is reduced. In this situation, many critics have pointed out the "unidirectional" nature of globalization, that is, the West's imposition of its own political, economic, and cultural values on other "non-hegemonic" areas and countries. In many cases, this kind of criticism is aimed at the United States; the United States has established a *de facto* world government that operates largely in secret, undermines and ignores legitimate elected bodies like the World Court and the United Nations, and controls large parts of the world (Chomsky, 1999: 148–49).[1]

However, globalization cannot be understood in terms of a single driving force or a unidirectional movement. For instance, the process is not reducible to an American or Western plot, however dominant. Nor is it simply the inevitable outcome of capitalism, or the consequences of a modern secular quest for universal truth, or the post–Cold War unipolar world system. A fuller explanation of globalization needs to consider a complex and fluctuating mix of forces, some of which are mutually reinforcing and some of which are contradictory.

As we see in the following sections, a closer examination of domestic and regional policies in the Third World regimes reveals that they are not merely "passive" actors in the process of globalization. Policymakers on the periphery have responded to the phenomenon of globalization: by defending their countries from the wave of globalization; by adapting their politics and economy to it; or by taking advantage of its tide for various purposes. What we intend to look at in this chapter is the last response. While many Middle Eastern regimes have showed some degree of antipathy toward globalization, especially politically and culturally, they have "actively" made use of the phenomenon to diffuse their internal challenge, Islamist movements, in a selective way. In this process, as Barnett Rubin rightly points out, ineffective, corrupt, or dictatorial governments have attempted to

find "external scapegoats" for their internal problems despite the fact that outside sources are not the primary cause of domestic problems and opposition.[2] Egypt, in particular, which has been regarded as a hotbed of Islamist movements, has been in the forefront of creating "a transnational anti-Islamist alliance" (Dessouki, 1995: 261). The accusation of "foreign" responsibility for Islamist violence in Egypt and the consequent attempt to build antiterrorism mechanisms might be understood as the tendency of Egyptian political and security authorities to cast the blame on foreign countries in light of their incapacity to control extremist violence, their need for a scapegoat, and their reluctance to liberalize the political environment.

Manufacturing Anti-Islamist Discourse

Before, or while, a regime applies certain policies, it is normal to create an appropriate environment or maximum support for the policies. This is because these kinds of environment and support may be helpful for a regime to execute the policies effectively and legitimately. Thus, the Mubarak regime has produced strong and consistent narratives of anti-Islamism domestically, regionally, and internationally. In this regard, this study examines the anti-Islamist discourse in terms of its thematic categories: the reasons behind the emergence of Islamist movements; the definition of Islamist movements; the consequence of Islamist violence; and the solutions to Islamist radicalism.

Islamism Caused by Foreign Involvement

Many scholars have devoted themselves to explaining the rise and development of Egyptian radical Islamist movements. However, their attempts have proven to be difficult because the reasons behind the growth of the movements are deep-rooted and complex. That is why there have emerged a number of interpretations and explanations that are different and sometimes overlapping. Four main categories of interpretation can be suggested. First, several analysts interpret the growth of Islamist movements as a result of the failures and inadequacies of the Egyptian "political" system. For example, Michael Hudson argues that the phenomenon of religious resurgence in the political arena is a "rejectionist backlash against modernization."[3] Second, Raymond Hinnebusch has offered an "ideological" interpretation. He points out that the religious revival followed a period in which such secular ideologies such as Arab socialism, Nasserism, and Arab

nationalism prevailed. Thus he sees the resurgence of Islamic feeling as a response to the "disillusionment with imported secular ideologies" in the wake of the 1967 defeat (Hinnebusch, 1985: 199). Third, Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Hamied Ansari present a "socioeconomic" model. According to them, Islamist movements have emerged in the course of the development process and they have expressed a degree of "social frustration" (Ansari, 1984: 141; Ibrahim, 1982). Finally, Western scholars like Bernard Lewis mainly suggest a "historical" interpretation. This explanation emphasizes the uniqueness of the relationship between Islam and politics. Lewis argues that the emergence of Islamist movements can be explained by the traditional importance of religion in politics (Lewis, 1989: 39–40).

As this brief review suggests, the reasons for the emergence of the radical movements are so complex and multi-factored that it is difficult to explain the revival by limiting it to one perspective or factor.[4] The Egyptian regime also tried to explain the religious resurgence in order to find appropriate solutions to it or in order to convey official interpretations to the public. However, almost all the explanations were apologetic, attributing the reasons for the resurgence to the nature of the Islamist movements and to external involvement, and paying less attention to internal political, social, and economic conditions.

"Foreign involvement" has been frequently mentioned among the various reasons for the resurgence of the Islamist movements in speeches, statements, and interviews of the president and ministers of interior on Islamist movements. Given that the causes of Islamism were so deep-rooted and complex that the movements could not be easily soothed with partial reforms, the ruling elite did not want to admit that the reasons were inherent in the present political situation and of a domestic origin.

In this respect, the political leaders asserted that external psychological encouragement and material support caused the emergence and violent activities of the Islamist movements.[5] According to the President, a conspiracy involving foreign governments and international terrorist groups was behind a surge in political violence in Egypt. In his May Day speech of 1993, he pointed to unspecified foreign involvement:

> This danger [of Islamist terrorism] has infiltrated our country through destructive thinking, which is supported and financed by various foreign sources.... We have many indications confirming their conspiracy. I cannot acquit the gangs of international terrorism.[6]

According to allegations of the government and pro-government commentators, the external factors contributing directly to the growth of Islamist movements in Egypt can be divided into three channels: financial support, psychological encouragement, and routes for weapons and training. First, on a financial level, Islamist groups received support from Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia, and used it in order to build their social infrastructures like mosques and other public service centers (Fandy, 1993: 31–32). Besides providing this financial support, the Gulf States played an important role in giving Egyptian Islamist movements a more violent tone. Since the Nasser regime, many Islamists escaped Egypt to work in the Gulf States. There, they were exposed to the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, which, in one reading, can be interpreted in the direction of protest against the status quo and even radical action.[7]

Second, the Iranian revolution gave dissatisfied Muslims a visible example of the political power of a mobilized protest movement,[8] whereas the secular Arab regimes and the United States, which had thought Iran to be a secure force in the Middle East, were greatly shocked by the outcome of the revolution. Considering the fact that the Islamist movements in Egypt had their own dynamic before the Iranian revolution, participating in social activities under the encouragement of Sadat, it is difficult to say that the revolution caused or considerably strengthened the Islamist movements. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the revolution served to "quicken the Islamic resurgence" (Akhavi, 1989: 152–53). In this example of Islamist victory, Egyptian Muslim activists were able to find consolation, and they were encouraged to direct their activities to the establishment of an Islamic state based upon Islamic laws. Indeed, some radical Islamists announced that Egyptian Islamist movements could learn a lot from the case of the Iranian Islamic revolution.[9] In this respect, of the various Muslim states targeted by Egyptian officials,[10] Iran was most frequently blamed as a country that had exported terrorism and distorted Islamic ideas. The Egyptian security authorities, for example, announced in 1988 that Iran sponsored a Shiite organization inside Egypt through one of its diplomats in Cairo. According to the allegations of the security authorities, the organization, which included Egyptians and other Arabs, visited Iran to acquire military training and religious indoctrination.[11]

Finally, the Egyptian regime was also critical of Libya and Sudan as gates through which Egyptian or foreign terrorists and weapons had

been infiltrated and smuggled. In particular, the Egyptian regime accused Sudan of hosting camps for the military training of members of Islamist groups, and of allowing radical Islamist elements to take refuge on its territory. After Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir took power in a military coup in 1989, he forged a close alliance with the leader of the National Islamic Front and Sudanese Parliament Speaker, Hasan al-Turabi. The two, according to Egyptian officials, turned Sudan into a haven for several Arab militant organizations fighting to overthrow their government with the help of al-Turabi's dream of building an "Islamic Empire" in Africa. During the 1990s, Sudan was allegedly regarded as Iran's ideological and strategic ally, and the two countries appeared to cooperate in a number of areas. Sudan received cheap oil supplies, military training, and light weapons and ammunition from Iran. In return, Sudan provided Iran with a good outlet for Iranian influence to North Africa.[12] Sudan was more fiercely criticized by the Egyptian regime, especially after the Ethiopian government claimed Sudanese involvement in the failed assassination attempt against Mubarak in Addis Ababa on June 26, 1995.[13] President Mubarak warned what he described as an isolated regime in Khartoum, "Egypt would not remain silent to a neighbor who opted for conspiracy and betrayal and turned Sudan into a base for international terrorism."[14]

During the second half of the 1990s, Pakistan[15] and Afghanistan were severely criticized by the Egyptian regime. However, the criticisms were mainly aimed at the Islamists residing in the two countries, not the regimes.[16] During the Afghanistan War, Egyptian *mujahidun* fought to liberate the Muslim country from the Soviet Union's occupation. The war provided them with a more militant spirit of *jihad*, weapons, and training. According to Rubin, by the late 1980s, thousands of Arab youth, largely recruited from extremist groups, came to Afghanistan to "perform *jihad*, and the Arab volunteers also set up their own training programs and camps in eastern Afghanistan."[17] The victory of the *mujahidun* against the Soviet-sponsored communist regime was perceived as a victory for the Islamic cause and Islamist movement. Uplifted in this way, the Egyptian volunteers went back to their country to continue the struggle against their own oppressive regime—schooled now in more violent and military tactics.[18]

The official Egyptian concern began with the case of the group of *al-aidun* from Afghanistan (the Returnees from Afghanistan), whose members trained for armed *jihad* tried to infiltrate Egypt for their internal *jihad*.[19] In an interview with *The New Yorker* magazine at

the beginning of 1995, President Mubarak pointed to the issue of Afghanistan-based Islamists:

> The majority of militants were Afghanistan war veterans, widely known as the Arab-Afghans. They are now re-infiltrating all over the Middle East. They have training, money, and arms, and they are now looking for a new cause. The problem of violence in this country began when the first man returned from Afghanistan. Before that, there was a dialogue between al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya and the government.[20]

Particularly after the explosion at the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan in November 1995, Hasan al-Alfi often argued that terrorists were financed and trained from foreign countries, and Islamist elements outside planned and carried out terrorist operations inside Egypt via their employees.[21]

The accusations were not confined to only Islamic countries. During the mid-1990s when sporadic attacks by Islamists were perpetrated, the regime added European countries to the list of terrorism-supporting states. The main reason for the accusations was that European countries had offered refuge to Egyptian or Arab Islamists. Minister of Interior Hasan al-Alfi also contended: "The danger [of terrorism] is not at home but is abroad as some [European] countries harbor terrorist elements and give them political asylum and sometimes nationality."[22]

One of the most interesting points in this explanation is that the government exploited its bilateral relationship with other countries against radical Islamist groups. All the countries that were targeted by the Egyptian government for their involvement had not had or did not have good relations with Egypt. Iran, after its Islamic Revolution, had been viewed as one of the most inimical powers instigating violence in Egypt, while Saudi Arabia, which had been suspected by many analysts of giving support to Islamist groups,[23] was not officially or publicly criticized. Notably, however, Iran was rarely mentioned after 1997, when the two countries began to seek diplomatic rapprochement. Sudan was on the list of countries supporting terrorism in Egypt after the beginning of the 1990s when the diplomatic relationship between the two countries declined, while the name of Libya was suddenly deleted from the list when the two countries reopened their borders and resumed intimate relations.

As shown in the abovementioned explanations for the emergence of the Islamist movements, the Egyptian political elite differed in their perspectives from the arguments of academic and media circles;

the Egyptian regime paid less attention to political and socioeconomic interpretations. Yet, the Egyptian leaders put the emphasis on foreign involvement as one of the important reasons behind the religious resurgence. This official attitude toward the Islamist movements contained a political goal. The regime also made great efforts to deny a linkage between Islamist violence and the inherent political, economic, and social situation by arguing that the violent incidents resulted from external forces that sought to destabilize Egypt. In so doing, it deflected attention away from critical domestic problems and its own ineffective responses to these difficulties.

Defining Islamists as Terrorists

It is not easy to choose a term that can be used to indicate actors and ideologies concerned with Islam-related political and social phenomena. Scholars and the mass media have used or introduced various terms to describe the actors and their ideologies. Such terms as "terrorism (terrorists)," "fundamentalism (fundamentalists)," "extremism (extremists)," "Islamic (or Islamist) movements," "Islamic revivalism or reformism," "political Islam," and "antigovernment social movements" have often been the titles of books, articles, or news reports. At times, these terms have been used interchangeably or synonymously. At other times, they have been chosen by some scholars for their specific academic purposes, while at others they have been used in the mass media or by political leaders for political reasons.

In the case of the conflict between the Mubarak regime and radical Islamist movements, there have appeared various terms for the anti-regime movements. In the speeches and statements of the president and interior ministers, one of the most frequently mentioned terms was "terrorist (*al-irhabi*)" or "terrorism (*al-irhab*)." In its lexical meaning, "terrorism" strongly implies a use of "violence" for political aims. In this regard, this term was much more often mentioned by the regime representatives after the second half of 1992 when Islamists started to intensify their attacks on tourists and police. It soon became one of the popular expressions in the daily life of the Egyptian public during the 1990s.[24] Indeed, they often used a word, *al-unf* (violence) with "terrorism" or "terrorist."[25] It is striking that, despite the deployment of this term, its use has been criticized by many Arab intellectuals and Western scholars as a biased expression against Islam. Indeed, it has been warned that the over-use of this kind of word has resulted in "Islamophobia" and "misrecognition" of Islam, Muslims,

and Arabs.[26] Even the political leaders have sometimes complained about the West's equation of Islam and terrorism or violence.[27] Nevertheless, with this emphasis on the negative aspects of the anti-regime movements, the ruling elite was able to justify its repressive policies against them.

Islamism as a Threat to International Security and Peace

One of the main themes that was frequently mentioned in the statements of the president and ministers of interior was the consequences of religious activism. The political leaders illustrated various negative effects of Islamist extremism and terrorism. According to their statements, the negative consequences can be summarized into five main areas: domestic political and social stability, national economy, morality of youth, image of Islam, and international security. Overall and unsurprisingly, the language invoked for the evaluation of the consequences was intended to warn the Egyptian public and the international community about the danger of the Islamist movements and their violent activities.

A serious consequence of Islamist activism referred to by the regime was its danger to international security and peace. These statements contained an important strategic message of the regime's anti-Islamist policies. Extending the range of Islamist threat from the domestic to the international field, the regime intended to warn the international community against the threat and, ultimately, to gain international support in its harsh anti-Islamist policies. In this regard, most of the statements mentioning this point were concentrated on regional and international conferences, and interviews with foreign media. Before the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in September 1998, President Mubarak warned that the phenomenon of terrorism "has infiltrated many world societies and is posing a direct threat to their security and stability."[28] In his speech at the fifteenth Arab Interior Ministers Conference in January 1998, Minster of Interior Habib al-Adli described terrorism as a "cancerous epidemic that malignantly infiltrates into most of the countries and gnaws the bones of people's lives."[29] Furthermore, according to the political elite, the terrorist phenomenon also threatened the peace process in the Middle East. Mubarak pointed out that terrorism "impairs the Middle East peace process and poses a threat to the parties to the peace process," giving such examples as the assassination of former Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and attacks committed by Hamas.[30]

International Cooperation as a Vital Solution to Terrorism

After examining the reasons for and consequences of Islamist activism, the Egyptian regime suggested several solutions in order to cope with the religious threats. Various "stick-and-carrot" solutions were suggested: physical crackdown, disseminating correct Islamic ideas, international cooperation, legislative and administrative measures, dialogue, and comprehensive reform. The first four solutions can be described as stick policies because the main purpose of these policies was to exterminate the radical Islamist movements. The last two suggestions constituted carrot measures in that they were designed to respond to the demands of the anti-regime movements and show the regime's willingness to negotiate with the opposition. According to the statements of the president and ministers of interior, it is clear that the regime placed much more importance upon the coercive measures than the carrot policies.

Among the stick policies, the Egyptian regime frequently emphasized internationalization of antiterrorism as a viable solution to violence. As we have already seen, the political officials often stressed that violence and terrorism were instigated and supported by foreign powers. Given that they believed that foreign involvement was a key ingredient in Islamist activism, it was inevitable that they would see a solution on the international level. In this context, the Egyptian government argued that extremism and terrorism were not limited to Egypt or the Arab world only, but existed throughout the world, posing serious threats to the entire international society. For example, President Mubarak, arguing that terrorist incidents in Egypt were a trivial matter compared with those of other countries, said: "Violence is an exotic phenomenon. . . . We should thank God that what has happened in Egypt cannot be compared with other incidents elsewhere in the world."[31]

On the basis of the "omnipresence" of terrorism and extremism, the second step in the internationalization policy was concentrated on urging international cooperation in combating terrorism.[32] On various occasions such as in interviews with foreign media, at international conferences, and on visits to foreign countries, President Mubarak and his interior ministers often argued that international cooperation in countering terrorism was necessary. The details of their arguments and proposed or implemented initiatives are dealt with in the following section.

From this examination of the regime's anti-Islamist narratives, we can find interconnections between several discursive levels—the

explanation of the reasons for Islamist opposition, the choice of the terms employed, the warning of negative consequences, and the suggestion of solutions. As we have seen, the regime tended to argue that Islamist radicalism resulted, to some extent, from foreign involvement. One of the terms most commonly used for the Islamist movements was "terrorist." By means of this explanation and use of the term, Egyptian leaders tried to find scapegoats, attributing the reasons for the Islamist resurgence to others—mainly foreign governments or foreign Islamist groups—not to their own government or the inadequacies of the political and economic system. The Egyptian officials also warned of the negative effects of Islamist terrorism on regional and international security. Consequently, one of the main solutions proposed and supported by the leaders was an internationalization of antiterrorism. Thus, the anti-Islamist or antiterrorist narratives and initiatives have been deliberately correlated to define or interpret Islamism and to legitimize the consequent regime's containment of Islamists inside and outside Egypt.

Creation of International Antiterrorism Mechanisms

The strategies adopted by the Egyptian state in combating violent Islamist factions may be divided in general along domestic and international battle lines. Egypt's efforts to address violent Islamist movements outside its borders began in earnest in the 1990s, when leaders and members of various groups began to seek havens abroad throughout Asia, Europe, and the Arab world. Islamist groups have not only engaged in direct military action, as the Egyptian government claims, but have also pursued their objectives actively through the media and political channels. In reaction to this situation, the Egyptian regime has been actively involved in its international efforts to combat these leaders abroad and other "terrorism-supporting" groups or countries.

The internationalization policies adopted by the Egyptian government can be categorized into two main areas: fostering an international antiterrorism environment through international conferences and meetings of international organizations and signing and implementing bi- or multilateral security agreements and cooperative systems. First, Egypt hosted and participated in various international conferences and meetings, and the political leaders emphasized the importance of international cooperation against terrorism. Upon inaugurating the ninth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of

Offenders in May 1995, President Mubarak called for international cooperation in the war against terrorism. Addressing delegates from over 140 countries, he also said that progress in confronting terrorism could be achieved through "the frameworks of crime prevention, model international treaties, treaties for the extradition of offenders and the principle of judicial cooperation."[33] One of the best results of the Egyptian government's efforts at internationalization can be found in Egypt's hosting of the Sharm al-Shaykh Peacemakers Summit on March 13, 1996.[34] At the conference, President Mubarak warned world leaders and the international community against the increasing new threat of terrorist movements and called for the coordination of efforts to counter them:

> We must intensify the legitimate struggle against terrorism and violence in all shapes and forms with special attention to the Middle East for its strategic importance.... We hope to create mechanisms to guarantee the co-ordination of all of our efforts and the efforts of the international community to crush the forces of evil and terrorism and revive the hope of upcoming generations in a better life.[35]

This summit can be regarded as an important "symbolic" success in the regime's anti-Islamist policies. The heads of state at the summit underlined the threat of terrorism to the region and the world, and emphasized Egypt's significant role in combating international terrorism. U.S. President Bill Clinton denounced violence and terrorism, pointing out that "terrorist acts claimed the lives of innocent people."[36] British Prime Minister John Major also said that his country would "exert utmost efforts to prevent the terrorist groups and extremism from taking Britain as a haven."[37] These leaders, and notably Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, specifically pointed an accusing finger at Iran as the center of international terrorism in the region.[38] As this coincided exactly with Egyptian policy, it would have been particularly welcomed by President Mubarak. With such a successful hosting of the summit, therefore, the regime was able to assure the Egyptian public and to project to the international society that its mission against the Islamists was "just and right."

The use of international conferences and meetings of international organizations to counter Islamist activities became more pronounced after the 1997 Luxor incident, which confirmed, according to security authorities, the danger of terrorism to the world. At the end of 1997, the Egyptian regime actively participated in the General Assembly of the United Nations, and helped it adopt a resolution that

condemned terrorism and urged member states to adopt effective measures to prevent it. States were specifically called on to ratify an "International Treaty for the Consolidation of International Cooperation in Combating Terrorism," which demands that member states provide every possible help in investigations, legal procedures, and extradition of terrorists in the case of terrorist attacks with bombs and biological and chemical materials.[39] In March 1998, Cairo hosted a meeting of experts from member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to draft the guidelines of an antiterrorism resolution. The guidelines were based on a "code of conduct" approved by the OIC summit held in Tehran in December 1997. Egypt was the prime mover behind the code.

In April 1998, during an extraordinary meeting at the headquarters of the Arab League, Arab interior and justice ministers agreed on the first treaty promising cooperation in the fight against terrorism. The treaty commits Arab countries to the war against terrorist crimes. They are required to tighten their borders to prevent attempts to smuggle weapons and explosives or the infiltration of terrorists. Signatories are obligated not to support terrorist acts and to refrain from receiving, training, or providing terrorists with weapons. The treaty also lays down guidelines for the secret exchange of information as well as the extradition of terrorists, whether through diplomatic channels or by the ministries of justice in the countries concerned. In October in the same year, Egypt used its position as host of an InterPol conference to press the international police organization to endorse proposals for greater restrictions on the movement of terrorist suspects, cutting off their sources of funding, preventing them from seeking havens abroad and securing their extradition. Thus, it has been argued by many political analysts that the Egyptian regime tried to use these international decisions to supplement its existing antiterrorism agreements with other countries and to augment its international anti-Islamist operations.[40]

Second, the Egyptian regime made great efforts to create an antiterrorism mechanism through bi- or multilateral agreements with other countries. The ministers of interior were mostly responsible for the building of such regional and international security mechanisms, and they often spoke of the need for regional and international cooperative arrangements.[41] Before the Shura Council in February 1997, Minister of Interior Hasan al-Alfi reported on security cooperation with other countries:

> The Ministry's security plan has been based on co-operation and direct co-ordination with friendly Arab and foreign countries to follow up terrorist activities and arrest its mastermind and roving elements

> around the world. Security agreements have been signed with a number of countries and co-ordination has been established with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice for the extradition of those elements on the basis of signed agreements.[42]

It can be said that security agreements reached with other countries, especially since 1992, were intended to cut the connections between Islamist groups inside Egypt and exiled Islamist leaders outside the country.[43] On the basis of such agreements, which were aimed at the extradition of what officials called "Islamist criminals," the government consistently demanded that countries hosting Islamist leaders hand them over to the Egyptian authorities and not grant them the right of political asylum.[44] The results were relatively positive with such other Arab and Muslim countries as Pakistan, Yemen, and the Gulf states.[45] However, Sudan and Afghanistan rejected such calls for political reasons, and most European countries, mainly Britain, Switzerland, and Denmark, were reluctant to comply on the grounds that the current judicial system, notably the military courts, could not guarantee fair trials.[46]

There was, nevertheless, on European soil a case of limited success in the international anti-Islamist policy of the Mubarak regime. In September 1996, the so-called fundamentalist conference (the actual name was Rally for Islamic Revival) was supposed to be held in London. The regime made a great effort to abort the conference. According to Egyptian sources, the president himself asked the international community to block the conference, emphasizing that it would be a "gathering point of many terrorism-supporting elements from all over the world" and that it would not "serve the issue of confronting international terrorism."[47] In the end, the British government was "obliged" to intervene and cancel the conference.[48] However, the Egyptian security officials were still not satisfied with the reluctance of European countries to cooperate. At the end of the sixteenth General Assembly of Arab Interior Ministers in Amman in 1999, the Minister of Interior Habib al-adli stated: "The International community is showing greater awareness of the dangers of terrorism, yet some European countries continue to allow militants to use their territory as a springboard for action against Egyptian interests."[49] It is also worth mentioning that one of the striking Egyptian efforts to create antiterrorism mechanisms with Western countries was that the Egyptian regime allowed the Federal Bureau of Investigation to open its office in Cairo in order to promote Egypt's coordination with other countries in antiterrorist campaign. In spite of criticisms made by various circles saying that this would infringe on the

sovereignty of Egypt, Hasan al-Alfi justified the opening as a natural phenomenon: "We are at the stage of international cooperation in all fields, not only in the fields of economy and politics, but also in the field of security, as the world becomes one village."[50]

Conclusion

One of the most apparent phenomena in the post–Cold War period is the attempt of Western leaders and the media to replace the Soviet threat with an unidentified image of fundamentalist terrorists. In reaction to this trend, many scholars, especially critics of globalization, have pointed out that this phenomenon is a part of the unidirectional nature of globalization, that is, the West's imposition of its own political and cultural values on non-hegemonic areas. This criticism cannot be totally denied. However, this case study of Egypt may demonstrate that a deep consideration of the complex interrelations between domestic and international factors is necessary to understand a globalization trend. A non-hegemonic country is not merely a passive actor in the process of globalization. The Egyptian regime has taken advantage of post–Cold War regional and international politics in its domestic confrontation with Islamist movements. The Mubarak regime, in particular, has actively made use of the phenomenon of globalization to diffuse its internal Islamist challenge through the accusation of "foreign" responsibility for Islamist violence in Egypt and the consequent initiatives of building antiterrorism mechanisms.

This policy of internationalization has obvious political purposes. The Egyptian regime tried to eliminate Islamist elements, especially Islamists residing outside Egypt, and terrorist groups supporting Islamists inside Egypt as terrorist incidents had occurred intermittently in spite of the considerable success of the regime in curbing Islamist trends in the 1990s. But, more importantly, the anti-Islamist initiatives on the international level have helped to enhance the regime's legitimacy in its approach to dealing with Islamist movements and its reluctance to liberalize political environment. Mubarak may hope that the international community may be more concerned about the Islamist threat and have more understanding of Egypt's need to place limits on individual rights to ensure social order. Diaa Rashwan, a researcher at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, points out the implication of this attitude:

> Facile analyses which place the blame for Islamism on vague "external" forces while overlooking the true causes that cause some Islamists to

> adopt violent tactics, must be discarded. This transition may be difficult because such analyses are now one of the cornerstones of official Arab "strategies" developed to combat Islamism in both its violent and moderate political functions. Refusing to make this transition, however, constitutes an attempt to evade the true domestic causes that have contributed to the Islamist trend and domestic Islamist violence and is only a way of putting off the necessary courageous and responsible measures.[51]

Finally, the internationalization of anti-Islamism conducted by the Egyptian regime has shown some positive results. Violent incidents committed by radical Islamists decreased after the second half of the 1990s. There have been regional and international cooperative activities like extradition of convicted Islamists to Egypt. Nevertheless, one of the consequences resulting from the internationalization initiatives has been more radicalized international violence conducted by Islamist groups, aimed at attacking the international antiterrorism mechanisms. After the Egyptian regime launched assertive international measures, there were serious international terrorist incidents such as the failed attempt to assassinate President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in May 1995, the explosion at the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan in November 1995, in which 5 Egyptians and 12 Pakistanis and Afghans were killed and 60 others were wounded, and the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed at least 260 people. Who, then, can surely say that the New York bombing on September 11, 2001 had nothing to do with internationalization of antiterrorism policies taken by various Islamic and Western countries?

Notes

1. Noam Chomsky is well placed to represent a left-wing view of globalization and the new world order. For over 30 years, Chomsky has been denouncing U.S. foreign policy, complaining noisily about the way the United States has treated so many Third World countries. To take a typical example, he lectured at the American University in Cairo in 1993 about the Cold War period, during which U.S. operations included the overthrow of the conservative parliamentary regime in Iran in 1953, restoring the Shah and his brutal rule.
2. Rubin states that the violence in Egypt and other Islamic countries is due mainly to the political and social blockage experienced by the youth of those countries, "not a handful of activists returning from Afghanistan" (Rubin, 1997).

3. Hudson presents it as "negative development," contrary to Western patterns of modernization where secularization of the political system is assumed to be of critical importance for political development (Hudson, 1980: 10–13).
4. One of the most prominent scholars advocating a multi-factoral interpretation is John Esposito. According to him, the resurgence of Islamist movements has come from the "Muslims" self-criticism and a quest for identity and authenticity after they experienced the failure of and disillusionment with political systems, socioeconomic policies, and ideologies mainly based on secular and Western models of development. See Esposito (1983, 1991, 1994, and 1997).
5. However, Islamists denied these government allegations. For example, an Islamist activist in Upper Egypt, who was interviewed by *al-Wasat* without revealing his name, clearly stated that there was no financial support, training, and supply of weapons from outside. He added, "We do not have any relations with Iran and Sudan, and we [simply] support these countries as Islamic countries which try to apply Islamic law." In "Al-Usuliyyun fi Asiyut: Kharif bila Hiwar" (The Fundamentalists in Asiyut: Autumn without Dialogue) *al-Wasat*, 89 (October 11, 1993: 18).
6. *Al-Ahram*, May 2, 1993. In line with the speech of the president, Minister of Religious Affairs (Awqaf), Mohammad Ali Mahjub, also maintained that the political leadership in Egypt had documents and proof that would disclose the conspiracies of some countries against Egypt. *Minbar al-Islam*, 51 (September, 1992): 50.
7. Sivan says that the "Neo-Hanbalite Wahhabism" was considerably influenced by the ideas of Ibn Tayimiyya. Sivan also argues that the reason for the influence of Ibn Taymiyya upon the radical Islamist political theory can be found mainly in his teachings on the question of the Mongols. Current Islamists find in his doctrine a kind of inspired solution to the penetration of Western influence into the local culture and the undermining of Islam from within. The analogy of the Mongols and the concept of pre-Islamic *jahiliyya*, according to Sivan, have been interpreted to suit the new state of affairs (Sivan, 1990). See also Fandy (1994: 617–19).
8. Dessouki states that the Iranian revolution "provided a model for revolutionary Islam," gave a "moral uplift to all those who were challenging existing regimes in the name of Islam," and demonstrated "the ability of its leaders for mass mobilisation and coalition-building." He also says that its "lofty principles and the charismatic appeal of its leaders were perceived as inspiring for Islamist movements and threatening to the ruling elite" (Dessouki, 1995: 250–54).
9. For example, one of the leaders in the Jihad Group wrote in his leaflet in 1987 that "no one can deny that the Iranian revolution was a successful model of Islamist revolution" (Abu al-Fida, 1991: 294).

10. For the involvement of foreign countries in the Egyptian Islamist movements or the connections between them, see Ghasan Sharbil, "Usama al-Baz li *al-Wasat*" (Usama al-Baz to *al-Wasat*), *al-Wasat*, 132 (August 8, 1994): 20–23.
11. *Al-Ahram*, June 15, 1988.
12. *Al-Hayat*, December 6, 1992; *al-Wafd*, May 14, 1991; *al-Ahram*, July 13, 1991.
13. "Uthman Mirghani, Azma Misr and al-Sudan: Muaskarat wa Siyasat Turabi" (Egyptian-Sudanese Crisis: Camps and Policies of Turabi), *al-Majalla*, 804 (July 9–15, 1995): 20–25.
14. In his speech on the forty-third anniversary of the July 23 Revolution, *al-Ahram*, July 23, 1995.
15. According to a report from *al-Majalla*, around 1,200 Egyptians entered Pakistan from the beginning of the 1980s in order to be trained for the guerrilla war against the Soviet occupation forces. Egyptians were the biggest group of the multinational volunteers participating in the Afghanistan war. Among them, there were several spiritual leaders, Muhammad Shawqi al-Islambuli and 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, who led Muslim volunteers and radicalized their ideologies. Majdi Mustafa, "Baqaya al-Afghan al-'Arab Wajadu fi al-Hudud al-Afghaniyya al-Pakistaniyya Maladhihim al-Amn" (The Remaining Afghan-Arabs Found the Afghan-Pakistan Borders as their Secure Paradise), *al-Majalla*, 824 (November 26–December 2, 1995): 22–28.
16. According to Hala Mustafa, an expert on Islamist movements, Afghanistan has turned into "a den of militant organisations that enjoy freedom of movement and military training in the absence of any strong central government." See her interview with *al-Ahram Weekly*, "Piecing Together the Puzzle," *al-Ahram Weekly* (August 13–19, 1998).
17. One of the well-known training camps was in Jahi, Paktia province, and named Maasadat al-Ansar. It was constructed with the help of Usama bin Laden and hosted several hundred volunteers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Algeria, Libya, Morocco in 1988 (Rubin, 1997: 195–99). See also Rubin (1995) and Mahmud Sadiq, "Afghanistan wa Askra al-Suluk al-Islami" (Afghanistan and the Militarization of Islamist Behaviour), in *al-Watan al-Arabi*, 1151 (March 26, 1999): 4–7.
18. The Egyptian government disclosed the existence of an organization with the name of the Returnees from Afghanistan. See Ayman al-Sayyad, "al-Afghan al-Misriyyun: Zaimuhum Muhammad Ahmad al-Islambuli" (The Egyptian Afghans: Their Leader Is Muhammad Ahmad al-Islambuli), *al-Majalla* (January 13–19, 1993): 28–31.
19. The Egyptian Military Court that examined the case, no. 24 of 1992, sentenced eight members to death. However, only one of them was

actually executed because the remaining seven leaders were outside Egypt, see Ayman al-Sayyad, "al-Haribun" (The Fugitives), *al-Majalla*, 805 (July 22–26, 1995): 22 and Podeh (1997: 53).

20. Quoted from "Mubarak Reveals Brotherhood's Links," *al-Ahram Weekly* (January 26–February 1, 1995): 1.
21. Muhammad Wajdi Qindil, "Khafaya al-Tanzim al-Alami" (Secrets of the International Organization: Interview with Hasan al-Alfi), *al-Watan al-Arabi*, 935 (February 3, 1995): 26–29.
22. In his speech at a popular rally in Upper Egypt, ibid., September 18, 1997. See also his interview with *al-Majalla*, "Abd al-Latif al-Manawi, al-Irhabiyun Yaamalun li Salih al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin" (The Terrorists Work for the Muslim Brotherhood), *al-Majalla*, 898 (April 27–May 3, 1997): 26–30.
23. In order to counteract the influence of Leftist ideologies and movements in its neighboring countries, Saudi Arabia used its new wealth from the oil price rises of the 1970s to support what seemed at the time more conservative Islamic causes. The Saudi government built mosques and training centers for Imams throughout the Islamic world and provided support for Islamic study circles and discussion groups (Ayubi, 1991: 179).
24. For example, the term "terrorist" was adopted as the title of a film, *al-Irhabi* (The Terrorist), in which one of the most popular Egyptian comedians, Adil Imam, was featured in a radical Islamist (terrorist) role. It was screened for a long period in 1993. The film depicts Islamists' personal characteristics and their organizational structure, suggesting that they are motivated by non-Islamic reasons like sexual frustration, and are organized by elements who have nothing to do with the real Islamic path. This film was hugely successful and brought about a popular following. However, at the same time, it was criticized by some people as ridiculous and clumsy. For comments on this film, see Beinin (1994: 28).
25. Addressing the joint session of the People's Assembly and Shura Council, the president said, "Fighting terrorism and violence should be the responsibility of the whole society." *Al-Ahram*, November 15, 1992.
26. See al-Azmeh (1994: 126–28). Even in the West, the phenomenon of Islamophobia has been criticized. For example, a report on this phenomenon published in Britain analyzes the reasons for it and its negative social effects, and proposes solutions. See The Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All" (The Runnymede Trust, 1997).
27. Celebrating the anniversary of al-Israa wa al-Miraj, the president called for exertion of the utmost effort for improving "the unjust and false image of Islam which was detrimental to the reputation of the Muslims as it was condemned with terrorism, violence, backwardness, and

retrogression." *Majalla al-Azhar*, 64 (February 1992): 868. See also his speech marking the Prophet's birthday, *al-Liwa al-Islami*, 556 (September 17, 1992): 3.

28. *Al-Ahram*, September 4, 1998.
29. *Al-Ahram*, January 7, 1998.
30. At his press conference after inaugurating the Youth Product Exhibition, *al-Ahram*, March 10, 1996.
31. During his meeting with the parliamentary body of the National Democratic Party, *al-Ahram*, June 21, 1987. Almost exactly the same argument can be found in the interview of Minister of Interior Hasan al-Alfi with *al-Majalla*, Husam Diyab, "Wazir al-Dakhiliya li *al-Majalla*" (The Minister of Interior to *al-Majalla*), *al-Majalla*, 702 (July 25–31, 1993): 25.
32. Dessouki describes the regime's policy of internationalization as a part of "a transnational anti-Islamist alliance" (Dessouki, 1995: 261).
33. "Warding Off a Lawless Jungle," *al-Ahram Weekly* (May 4–10, 1995): 4. See also his speech before the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit at Casablanca in December 1994. According to *Crescent International*, a pro-Islamist and pro-Iranian newspaper, the summit adopted in effect a code of conduct to combat Islamist militancy in Muslim countries. The document, though not binding, urges OIC member states not to finance or support "terrorist" groups and to ensure that their territories are not used by these groups. At the summit, Mubarak accused Islamists of harming the cause of Bosnian Muslims. "OIC Summit Adopts Code to Fight Islamic Activism," *Crescent International* (January 1–15, 1995): 1 and 11.
34. The two main topics of the Conference were salvaging the Middle East peace process and combating terrorism. The heads of states who participated in the Conference were: the presidents of Egypt, the United States, and Russia; the prime ministers of the United Kingdom, Israel, France, and Spain; the kings of Morocco and Jordan; and the Palestinian leader. See Muhammad Yahya, "al-Irhab" (Terrorism), *al-Mukhtar al-Islami*, 161 (June, 1996): 26.
35. *Al-Ahram*, March 14, 1996. See also his speech at the Organisation of African Unity summit meeting held in Cairo in June 1993, *al-Ahram*, June 29, 1993; his speech before the twenty-seventh general meeting of UNESCO, *Minbar al-Islam*, 52 (November and December, 1993): 5–8; and a comment on his speech before the Casablanca Summit in 1994 in Said al-Tamimi, "Qimma al-Dar al-Bayda Tulin al-Harb ala al-Irhab" (The Casablanca Summit Declares War against Terrorism), *al-Watan al-Arabi*, 929 (December, 23, 1994): 12–14.
36. One day after the summit, Clinton earmarked $100 million as part of an antiterrorism pact with Israel to track down and root out militants. See *al-Ahram*, March 14, 1996; and Terterov (1996: 248).

37. *Al-Ahram*, March 15, 1996. Major added, "Let us not forget where the core of the problem lies. . . . We have already spelt this out to Iran and Libya." "Participants at Egyptian Summit Concede Victory to Hamas," *Crescent International* (April 1–15, 1996): 1 and 11.
38. *Al-Ahram Weekly* (March 28–April 3, 1996): 4. Peres in his rousing call to action said that "a name, address, and bank account" for terrorist groups now existed, adding that "Tehran has become the capital of terror. A conclusion must come about how to contain it." Christopher Walker and Ross Dunn, "Major Pledges to Sever Hamas Charity Lifeline," *The Times*, March 14, 1996.
39. Muhammad Alam, "Misr Tastahill al-Am bi Muwajaha al-Mutatarrafin fi al-Kharij" (Egypt Starts this Year with Confronting Extremists Outside), *al-Wasat*, 310 (January 1, 1998): 24.
40. Ibid.
41. For the activities of interior ministers in furthering security cooperation with other Arab and Islamic states, see the Egyptian and Algerian ministers of interior meeting in August 1992 (*al-Hayat*, August 26, 1992) and the Council of Arab Interior Ministers held in Tunisia in January 1993, where the Egyptian minister, in his speech, referred to the fact that "we are all in the same boat, and threatened by the same threat" (*al-Hayat*, January 5 and 6, 1993).
42. *Al-Ahram*, February 17, 1997.
43. The most wanted Islamist leaders outside Egypt by the Egyptian regime were: 'Umar Abd al-Rahman, the spiritual leader of al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya, in the United States; Ayman Rabi al-Dawahi, the leader of Al-Jihad, in Britain; Rafai Ahmad Taha, who was regarded as the real leader by the Egyptian security authorities, in Sudan; Tharwat Salah Shihata, one of the al-Jihad leaders, in Yemen; Mustafa Ahmad Hamza, regarded as the second leader of al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya after Ahmad Taha, in Kabul or Khartoum; Muhammad Shawqi al-Islambuli, one of the al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya leaders, in Kabul; Talaat Fuad Qasim, the spokesman of al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya, in Denmark; and others. See Muhammad Wajdi Qindil, "Secrets of the International Organisation (Khafaya al-Tanzim al-Alami," *al-Watan al-Arabi*, 935 (February 3, 1995): 26–29.
44. According to the statistics reported by *al-Wasat* in 1998, around 100 Islamist activists were handed over to the Egyptian security authorities from other Arab and Islamic countries during the several years before the report. Hamdi Rizq, "Misr: Khitta li Tasallum Qiyadat al-Tatarruf wa al-Unf" (Egypt: Plan for Taking Over Leaders of Extremism and Violence), *al-Wasat*, 341 (August 10, 1998): 16. For the policy of the Egyptian government toward European countries, see Ian Black, "Egypt Steps Up Pressure on Britain for 'Harbouring Islamic Terrorists,'" *The Guardian*, November 24, 1995.
45. Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi revealed in 1994 that Egypt had received 35 extremists from several Islamic countries. "al-Qahira

Turakkiz ala Tasallum Ada Laiha Kibar al-Muttahimin" (Cairo Focuses on Taking-Over the Members in the List of the Accused), *al-Wasat*, 136 (September 5, 1994): 26.

46. For the results and related information on this government policy, see Muhammad Alam and Muhammad Salah, "Misr Tasi ila Istirdad al-Ruus al-Kabira" (Egypt Makes an Effort to Bring Back the Big Heads), *al-Wasat*, 196 (October 30, 1995): 30–31.
47. In his meeting with youth at Egyptian universities on August 21, 1996, *Minbar al-Islam*, 55 (September and October, 1996): 9–12.
48. However, it seems that the British decision to cancel the conference was not made only as a result of Egypt's pressure. The media in Britain emphasized such other factors as internal security and opposition from the Jewish community in Britain. "Rally for Revival," *British Muslims*, 4 (September 20, 1996): 1–2; and "Cancellation of Rally for Revival," *British Muslims*, 4 (October 20, 1996): 1–2.
49. "Taking Terrorism to Task," *al-Ahram Weekly* (February 4–10, 1999): 2.
50. Al-Manawi, "al-Irhabiyun Yaamalun li Salih al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin" (The Terrorists Work for the Muslim Brotherhood), *al-Majalla*, 898 (April 27–May 3, 1997): 29.
51. Diaa Rashwan, "Asylum from Responsibility," *al-Ahram Weekly* (March 20–26, 1997): 10.

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Part 2



Global Schemes and Local Realities: Transnational Islam and the Palestinian Refugee Problem

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Chapter 5



Official Islam, Transnational Islamic Networks, and Regional Politics: The Case of Syria

Annabelle Böttcher

Introduction

Since the coup d'état in 1963, Syrian politics of Islam has been characterized by a permanent search for Islamic legitimacy. The Sunnis, who represent the majority of the population, felt increasingly alienated by successive minority regimes. In the pre-Asad period from 1963 to 1970, the deteriorating relationship between the ruling elites and the Sunnis led to an excessive use of repressive strategies aimed at gaining control of the domestic Islamic landscape. With the advent of Hafiz al-Asad in 1970, little room for maneuver was left. The Sunni religious establishment rejected his effort to redefine the politics of Islam. This boycott frustrated Hafiz al-Asad to the extent that he turned toward Sufi and Shiite Islam in search of possible cooperation. While most of the Sufi orders remained at a distance, the Naqshbandiyya[1] welcomed this unique chance to enter the political and religious scene. Close cooperation with the Kaftariyya Sufi order of the Syrian Grand Mufti, Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru, gave Sufi Islam a dominant role in Syrian religious politics. Another minor officially accepted Naqshbandi Sufi order is led by Sheikh Muhammad al-Khaznawi in Syrian Kurdistan. Shia Islam likewise became another powerful religious force with the introduction into the Syrian domestic

scene of Twelver Shiite international and transnational actors such as the Iranian state and the Beirut-based Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of Hizballah. This chapter examines how these Sufi and Twelver Shiite actors became so dominant in Syria's official Islam. It shows the close interaction between states and transnationally active Islamic networks in shaping the official politics of religion in Syria. Thereby, the late President Asad relied on the cooptation of religious and ethnic minorities, favoring Sufi orders with a Kurdish background. At the same time, the chosen representative of official Islam in Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru, established his own complex transnational network including Syrian Alawis, Iranian, and Lebanese Shiites, as well as Sunni Islamists. In addition to these complexities, the development of religious politics in Syria has taken place within a triangular military, economic, and political relationship among Syria, Iran, and Lebanon, emphasizing the intense interaction among global, regional, and local actors in shaping Middle Eastern politics.

Historical Background

Following the military putsch in 1963, Syria was ruled for the first time in its modern history by a coalition of ethnic and confessional minorities with a secular socialist ideology. The Sunni establishment, led by the *ulama*, refused to cooperate with the new rulers. This applies to the period from 1963 to 1966 as well as that of the Neo-Baath from 1966 to 1970, even though the spectrum of population represented in each regime was much broader than ever before (Rabinovich, 1971: 167 and 197–98). The phase of consolidation of Baathi rule established the antagonism between the secular socialist ruling elite and the Sunni majority strongly embedded in Islamic tradition and belief as a continuing pattern. There were various reasons for this lack of acceptance. It shows the annoyance of a layer of the *ancien régime* with its long tradition of political, economic, and cultural superiority vis-à-vis representatives of provincial descent and low social status. The petit bourgeois character of the new elite sharpened this confrontation of classes that further deepened the gap between urban and rural interests (Hinnebusch, 1982: 146). It is therefore not surprising that this early phase of Baathi rule was accompanied by polemics and uprisings. After the Neo-Baathi coup in February 1966, the contradictions became even more pronounced. The nationalization of foreign trade and parts of industry as well as the land reform affected vital interests of the traders and the *ulama*. Added to this, the secular ideas of the social order propagated with vigor by the new

elites offended more traditional strata of society. By the time Hafiz al-Asad seized power in 1970 the tension was even greater. The fact that he was an Alawi[2] encouraged oppositional movements to concentrate on the religious and thus the political legitimacy of the regime. The struggle for Islamic legitimacy was just concealing a fierce struggle for economic and political power. The majority of the Alawis are from the hinterland of Lattakia, where they led a miserable existence of rural Lumpenproletariat until the late 1950s (Batatu, 1981: 333–34).

The Sunnis saw the subsequent elevation of some members of this underprivileged sect to a political, economic, and cultural elite as a provocation. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, Asad's rule was based on a system of patronage that was formed along tribal, regional, and confessional loyalties (Hinnebusch, 1982: 144; van Dam, 1996). It was less competence than a direct and absolute relationship of loyalty that was decisive for the regime with regard to the distribution of positions. In the Middle East, tribal, regional, and confessional factors are the main determinants of loyalties and thus it is not surprising that "accidentally" many Alawis occupied key posts (Batatu, 1981: 331 f.; Abd-Allah, 1983: 34 f.; Sadowski, 1988: 161–84). A minority of Sunnis might prove the opposite, for example, Mustafa Tlas, who has been minister of defense since 1972 and was a long-standing comrade of Asad, Abd al-Rauf al-Kasm, prime minister from 1980 to 1987, or Chief of Staff Hikmat Shihabi (Koszinowski, 1985: 551).

For the Sunnis, their presence served as a kind of alibi (Hinnebusch, 1982: 144). Seen through the "prism of confessionalism" (Seurat, 1989: 19) the Baath Party barely represented the "civil facade of the regime" (Seurat, 1989: 27, fn. 33). Under the cover of Baathism the Sunnis continued the practice of confessional politics (*taifiyya*).[3] The Sunni establishment challenged the Islamic legitimacy of the new regime and thus challenged its religious and political authority.[4] The role played by Sunni *ulama* of the Hanafi and Shafii schools of law (*madhahib*) in the escalation of the confrontation should not be underestimated. To control the Sunni infrastructure a wide range of bold and aggressive strategies were implemented, which almost completely overshadowed the efforts to develop a more sophisticated strategy of co-optation. The use of such measures as torture and imprisonment has earned Syria a reputation as an *état de barbarie*. The security apparatus, which reaches deep into the private sphere of the people, spreads terror and fear. Preachers and mosque personnel are imprisoned or suspended for not having complied with the demands of the ever-present secret service (*mukhabarat*). This is reinforced by means of structural control of all forms of institutionalized Sunni

Islam, such as the administration of Islamic endowments and mosques, and Islamic teaching (Böttcher, 1998a: 17–146).

The revolt of Hama, a town in central Syria, its siege, and partial destruction by the Syrian security forces in 1982 showed to what extent Hafiz al-Asad's regime was willing to use repressive measures in order to stay in power. Even though the uprising was led by only a small, radical faction of the Muslim Brothers and Sisters, it left a deep scar in the Syrian collective memory (Reissner, 1980; Abd-Allah, 1983: 191–96; Lobmeyer, 1995). It marked the end of the open challenge to the power holders' legitimacy regarding religious and political authority. Since this incident, though both sides have been very careful to avoid another confrontation, the struggle for legitimacy has continued but less openly.

After Hama the Syrian regime regained full control of the Sunni arena but pressure grew from the outside. Syria has since been confronted with a trend for religious orthopraxy felt throughout the Islamic world and this has exerted a strong effect on the Syrian Sunni population. As elsewhere in the Islamic world there has been a growing demand by Syrian Sunnis to integrate Islamic values in their social, political, and economic life. In order not to have radical Islamic currents provide these interpretations of Sunni Islam, the Syrian authorities decided to respond by developing their own version of Islam, the "official Islam" (*al-Islam al-rasmi*). While on the one hand any interpretation of Islam threatening the power holders is forbidden, on the other hand space has been created for those versions of official Islam that provide legitimacy to the regime. The strict rules of -planning such as those applied to the economy are even more rigorously applied to the field of Islam. Just as in trade and commerce, an oligarchy of "official license-holders," the Baathi sheikhs, are the profiteers of this monopolistic setting.

The Implementation of "Official Sunni Islam"

Syria's official Sunni Islam is a Sufi Islam and the most prominent "cooperation partners" of the regime are Kurdish Sufi orders: the Kaftariyya of Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru and the Khaznawiyya of Sheikh Muhammad al-Khaznawi. While the Sufi network of Sheikh Kaftaru is an urban phenomenon based in Damascus with a branch in Lebanon, called the Rajabiyya, the Sufi network of Sheikh al-Khaznawi is more of a rural phenomenon based in Syrian Kurdistan with branches in Kurdish communities all over the world. With the Sunni infrastructure

being under strict surveillance, the activities of these Sufi orders come as a surprise. It is clear that their success would not be possible without the consent of the Syrian regime.

Over the centuries Sufism developed an organizational structure, the Sufi orders, that evolved around a master, the sheikh or *murshid*. Sufi orders such as the Qadiriyya, the Mawlawiyya, and the Naqshbandiyya are among the most active and successful Islamic networks in the Middle East, Central Asia, China, the United States, and Europe. The size of Sufi networks varies from a dozen followers to hundreds of thousands. They are not confined to spiritual practice but also constitute powerful transnational economic, political, and social entities. Their flexibility in accommodating to the political, economic, and legal frameworks of their host states is the secret of their success.

The Syrian regime realized that these Sufi orders have a unique hierarchical structure that makes them reliable partners once the leading sheikh consents to some form of arrangement. Whether or not an Islamic network, be it Sufi or Salafi,[5] opposes, cooperates, or simply coexists with a state or regime, depends on its leader. He (or less frequently she) has to make the decision whether or not the relations of authority and the principles of legitimacy as defined by the ruling political authority should be accepted by his or her network. Whether the decision to cooperate with the political leadership of a host state will be accepted by the majority of his followers is dependent on the leader's charisma. There is a risk that the decision to cooperate might expose the leader and his network to pressure from oppositional forces within the network and outside, while the decision not to cooperate might lead to pressure from the political authority. A network's concept of social and political arrangements must be adapted to the framework set by state Islam.

Sufi networks, particularly Naqshbandi Sufi networks, deal well with this adaptation process because of their internal links of loyalty. Compared to other religious organizations, Sufi networks are tightly knit because of their pyramidal shape with strict hierarchies for male and female disciples. The most important element of this structure is the link between the sheikh and his disciples. Every disciple is in some way connected to the sheikh at the top of the Sufi pyramid. This represents a line of interaction and communication characterized by duration, frequency, and intensity. In Sufism this link is called the *rabita* and is an expression of utmost dedication and trust. It is formally established through a ceremony that consists of taking an oath. Praying, meditating with the sheikh, talking to him, and

listening to his teachings continuously renew it. The main interest for the majority of followers of a sheikh is the spiritual side. For them Sufism represents a spiritual approach concentrating on a Muslim's relation to God based on a set of rules of etiquette and behavior, litanies, and forms of meditation (Nasr, 1991: 3). Disciples of large Sufi networks usually see their sheikhs only during collective prayers, invocations (*dhikr*), or teaching lessons. They are granted an occasional personal meeting with the help of mediators. Being accorded time with him or his family is considered a privilege. Those who live in close proximity to the sheikh do not need the help of intermediaries (Schenk, 1984: 47–51). Elite members of a Sufi network, such as family members, have the oldest *rabita*, which has lasted for decades. They are usually interrelated and from the same ethnic and confessional background. They are responsible for the integration of "new disciples" through endogenous marriage within the network. Reinforcement of the *rabita* through ties of kinship, confession, and ethnicity provides a maximum stability of network connections.

The lack of the individual follower's participation in the decision-making process makes Sufi orders attractive collective cooperation partners for authoritarian states such as the Syrian. Sufi orders also cope well with expansion and easily absorb a growing periphery of sympathizers and profiteers. These join for reasons of economic, political, or social opportunism but for one reason or another they do not have the time or the interest in getting more involved. They are part of the network but might not be drawn toward the center until a later stage of their religious and spiritual development. As long as ordinary Muslims are involved in one way or another in a Sufi order, they will not be attracted to Islamic currents that are in opposition to the regime.

By playing the Sufi card, the Syrian regime is revitalizing a long tradition of Sufi Islam, which has always played an important role in Syrian religious, social, and political life. Famous Sufi sheikhs such as Khalid al-Naqshbandi or Amin al-Kurdi lived in Damascus and spread their Sufi teachings all over Syria (Geoffroy, 1995). Sufi Islam has usually coexisted peacefully with Salafi-oriented Islamic currents in Syria. Sufi sheikhs have been respected members of the Sunni religious establishments. In modern day Syria active Sufi communities flourish all over the country particularly in Damascus, Aleppo, and in the northeast of the country (de Jong, 1986: 205–43; Batatu, 1999: 103–05; Pinto, 2001). The fact that Sufi Islam has gained such a prominent role as an instrument in religious politics is not a Syrian phenomenon. Sufi sheikhs and their movements have always been powerful actors supporting or opposing political power.[6]

The Kaftariyya Sufi Order in Damascus

The Naqshbandi Sufi order of Sheikh Kaftaru is the classic example of a Sufi network whose leader decided to cooperate with the political authority.[7] This cooperation developed slowly and was accepted by the majority of the elite members within the network. The Kaftariyya's elite consists of Kurdish, Sunni disciples of the Shafii school of law.[8] They are all interrelated by marriage and kinship ties with the leading sheikh. Some of their relatives fled with Sheikh Kaftaru's father, Sheikh Amin, from Kurdistan and settled in the *Hayy al-Akrad*, the Kurdish neighborhood of Damascus. They joined Sheikh Amin in his study circles and later, after he had taken over the leadership position of the Sufi order, became his disciples. Their children studied with his son, Sheikh Ahmad (b. 1912). He succeeded his father in 1938 at the head of the Sufi order and developed it into what later became known as the Kaftariyya. These disciples represent the core of the network. They occupy key posts and make sure that the policies of the leading sheikh are being implemented. Meetings for the male and female "top Sufi management" are held regularly in the private residence of the sheikh on the outskirts of Damascus. For them the material success of their Sufi order on earth is as important as their spiritual advancement on the path to God. This attitude facilitates the implementation of certain crucial decisions entailed by cooperation with the authoritarian regime.

Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru's joint venture with the Baath Party dates back to the 1950s and took many years to develop. It was facilitated by the experience he acquired within the state apparatus. Beginning in 1948, he joined the *fatwa* administration as a teacher of Islam in Qunaytra on the Golan and in Damascus. In 1958, he was nominated Shafii *mufti* of Damascus. From 1959 to 1964 he had his own program on Syrian radio, where he explained Islamic topics to a broad public (Kaftaru, 1990). Following his motto, "cooperation with any national government" (al-Habash, 1996: 78) he showed great flexibility in adapting to the demands of the changing Baathi-regimes. A year after the coup d'état in 1963, he was elected Grand Mufti (*al-mufti al-amm*) of Syria. To this day his election has been considered highly controversial in Syria even though it has not been discussed officially. Three months after the Baathi seizure of power in 1963, the acting Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abu al-Yusr Abidin, was dismissed from his post. He was a popular sheikh in Syria and his dismissal was a clear move by the new regime to reduce the influence of Sunni sheikhs. An interim mufti filled the vacancy for almost a year

while the new power holders desperately sought a cooperative successor. Finally in 1964 an election was held and the popular Sheikh Hasan Habannaka lost by one vote against Sheikh Kaftaru (Böttcher, 1998a: 54–59). The Sunni clerical establishment never forgave Sheikh Kaftaru for his willingness to run against Sheikh Habannaka and has remained at a distance, isolating him from an important power base. But the Baathi regime discovered to their delight that Sheikh Kaftaru would cooperate with them in reducing his jurisdiction within the Ministry of Islamic Endowments (*wizarat al-awqaf*).

While his power as Grand Mufti continued to diminish, his career as the leader of a growing Sufi network received a boost at the beginning of the 1970s when Hafiz al-Asad took power. An excellent working relationship with President Hafiz al-Asad provided Sheikh Kaftaru with the necessary backing to expand his Sufi network. The two men had much in common. Sheikh Kaftaru's ethnic affiliation, his ambitions, and the fact of being a "newcomer" among the tightly knit networks of the Sunni establishment in Damascus gave him the status of an outsider with a twofold implication. On the one hand, he must have seemed trustworthy to a dictator who himself was a newcomer. On the other hand, the Sunni establishment's dislike for Sheikh Kaftaru made any alliance between the two improbable. Having no backing from this substantial Sunni power base, the sheikh was an ideal partner. His growing Sufi network provided a well-organized and reliable institutional structure for the implementation of official Islam. Through the network, Syrian official Sunni Islam gained visibility on a national and international level.

A visible indicator of this success story is the expansion of Sheikh Kaftaru's headquarters in the Kurdish neighborhood of Damascus, the Majmaa Abi al-Nur al-Islami or the Abu al-Nur Islamic Center (ANIC) (Böttcher, 1998a: 156–64). The ANIC contains Islamic schools, four universities, the mosque's main prayer hall, offices, a library, apartments, meeting rooms, and the headquarters of the *Ansar* charitable organization. When Hafiz al-Asad took power, the ANIC expanded dramatically. A concrete fortress replaced the old mosque in 1973. Two years later the *Mahad al-Dawa wa-al-Irshad* (Institute for mission and moral guidance), an Islamic secondary school, was founded. In 1974 the first of the four universities, the Faculty of Islamic Mission, was established as a branch of the Association of Islamic Affairs based in Libya. The Lebanese Open Faculty of Islamic Studies opened in 1989 as a branch of the *Kulliyat al-Imam al-Awzai* (Imam al-Awzai faculty) in Beirut.[9] The Islamic University of Pakistan was founded in 1989 and in 1992 the Sudanese

Faculty of the Pillars of Faith was created, which is a branch of the University of Omdurman. These universities were developed because the existing public Faculty of Sharia Law at the University of Damascus persistently refused to cooperate with the promotion of Sunni official Islam (Böttcher, 1998a: 131–46). The ANIC responded to the regime's demand. It trains functionaries and mosque personnel who actively contribute their share to official Sunni Islam. A number of Syrian officials in the Ministry of Islamic Endowments carry master and doctoral degrees from these universities, as do most of the holders of high-ranking posts in the ANIC hierarchy. All key positions for the management of the Kaftariyya network are in the hands of the sheikh's extended family. This elite represents the think-tank of the whole network, providing its *esprit de corps*. It controls the economic, political, and religious resources of the Sufi network and implements the sheikh's interpretations. Despite its well-established institutional structure and the large number of followers, the ANIC has no legal basis and remains extremely vulnerable to regime intervention. There is no decree or law granting it an official status. In the early 1990s the secret service in a show of strength demanded legal proofs of a number of Islamic centers. The problem was finally settled through top-level intervention, but this shows how fragile the basis of the network is.

Since the 1980s a rising number of foreign students from Arab countries, Central Asian republics, Europe, and the United States have participated in training programs for Arabic language and Islamic Studies in the ANIC. Originally directed by elite members of the Kaftariyya, these courses recently became more professional and americanized due to the involvement of American converts. In the summer of 1993, the first international intensive summer course for Arabic- and English-speaking imams, preachers, and teachers of Islamic religion took place. These summer courses have proved a great success for the ANIC allowing it both to establish a link with the Islamic world and to expand its Sufi network internationally. The ANIC's ability to respond to the demand for official Islam by other Islamic countries has made it the number one exporter of Islamic training in the Middle East. Its marketing department, the office for the surveillance of the Islamic mission abroad (*maktab riayat al-dawa al-islamiyya fi-al-kharij*), has signed a number of bilateral treaties with Islamic centers abroad. American and British disciples of Sheikh Kaftaru opened a branch of the ANIC in Baltimore, Maryland, called the College of Maqasid ash-Sharia. In Spring 2001, this college invited English-speaking students to its first summer program in

Damascus.[10] It is intended that the summer courses be recorded on video and later used as an on-line core curriculum for a virtual Islamic university, which would teach Islam through the internet to Western-born Muslims and converts to Islam. This project is supported by Sheikh Nazim al-Qubrusi al-Haqqani, the leader of one of the biggest international Naqshbandi networks.

There is an increasing awareness in Syria of the ANIC as the main Syrian connection to the international Islamic world. This is reflected by a growing presence and financial support of members of the Syrian business community in ANIC activities. They do not personally adhere to the network but rather use it to express loyalty to the regime and to make contacts with individuals of the international Islamic community. Foreign diplomats, journalists, researchers, and tourists flock to the ANIC in great numbers and are taken care of by a marketing department with well-trained male and female personnel. Thus the ANIC polishes the regime's Islamic image, which is still badly tarnished by the excessive use of repressive strategies. However, its success among the Sunni Syrian population is very limited and criticism by the Sunni establishment of "these Kurds up on the mountain" is strong.

At the height of the clashes with the Muslim Brothers, the regime revitalized the Quran institutes in Syria. At first there was no demand for them from the Sunni population who was terrified by the effects of the repressive strategies. By the end of the 1980s a hesitant interest in the holy scripture had developed into a large-scale demand, especially on the part of women. While any activity connected to the teaching of Islam is closely monitored by the regime, learning Quranic verses by heart, studying the techniques of recitation, and interpreting the verses seemed less likely to attract its adverse attention. The ANIC was integrated into this new policy and as early as 1981 it founded the Hafiz al-Asad Institutes for the Memorization of the Noble Quran. More institutes directed by close disciples of Sheikh Kaftaru followed. During the 1990s, the Quran institute in the ANIC had about 2,000 participants.

The Iranian Cultural Center in Damascus has increasingly cooperated with the ANIC in organizing Quran recitation competitions, in conformity with the growing activities of the Iranians in the field of Shiite religious teaching in Syria. This also seems to have been one of the few areas where a religious cooperation between Shiites and Sunnis could be attempted without regard to sensitive dogmatic differences. Since the 1990s the Iranian Cultural Center has organized a celebration at the Asad Library in Damascus in which the ANIC's

institute participates. Syrian Sunnis are reluctant to accept Iranian Shiite presence in Syria, which for them serves only strategic purposes. Only the ANIC agrees to cooperate with the Iranian Shiites. Iranian and Iraqi Shiites are frequent visitors in the ANIC. They attend the Friday prayer and participate in some of the ANIC activities. One of the keynote speakers of the international intensive summer course for Arabic- and English-speaking imams, preachers, and teachers in July 2001 was Sheikh Naim al-Qasim. He is the secretary general of Hizballah, the Lebanese resistance movement, and a high-ranking Twelver Shiite who studies with Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah in Beirut.

To fully implement this Naqshbandi–Shia cooperation Sheikh Kaftaru would have had to reinterpret some doctrines of classic Naqshbandi teaching where strong anti-Shiite polemics are still very much alive. But he did not do so. A closer look reveals that the rapprochement between Sheikh Kaftaru and the Twelver Shia is very superficial and merely a formal arrangement to please the Syrian regime. Having established for himself a place in the complex network connecting Syrian Alawis, Iranian Shiites, Lebanese Shiites, and Sunni Islamists in Syria and abroad, Sheikh Kaftaru has managed to maintain credibility among his disciples but he has lost the respect of the Sunni establishment and the majority of the Sunni population. Sunnis have not forgotten that during the Muslim Brothers' confrontation with the Syrian regime, Iran made a tactical decision and supported the Syrian authorities not the Muslim Brothers.

The Sufi Women's Movement

Since the 1980s, islamization in Syria has meant the mobilization of female Sunnis (Böttcher, 2002). During the violent confrontations with the Muslim Brotherhood the Syrian regime killed or imprisoned thousands of male Sunnis. Others went into exile. Tensions ran so high that male Sunnis were even arrested for going to the mosque for prayers. While male Sunnis kept a very low profile under the repression, female Sunnis became very active in the field of Islam, challenging state authorities in subtle ways. It is likely that this massive female mobilization was started by the female relatives of those male Sunnis who were victims of the regime's repression. The segregation between male and female spheres, which for religious and cultural reasons is very rigid in Syria, helped female islamization spread geographically and among all social levels of the society. This strict segregation makes surveillance of female Sunni activities very difficult

for the Syrian secret service. It is accustomed to operate in a secular male-dominated society and has some difficulties adapting to the challenges of a civil society that is becoming increasingly religious. Sunni women have realized this and are quietly conquering one of the few uncontrolled spaces in civil society. Many urban Sunni girls and women have started to study Islam in private circles. They usually learn Quran by heart, study Quran interpretation and recitation, Islamic history, and the basics of Islamic law. Equipped by these introductory courses with rudimentary knowledge of Islamic law, the students can adapt their daily individual and family life to the precepts of the sharia. At a higher level of studies, the message conveyed by the teacher might be more political. Underground Islamic movements such as the Qubaysiyya or the Muslim Sisters read Islamic books forbidden in Syria. They are particularly popular among upper-class girls and women who return to Syria with a Western education and are in search for intellectually more challenging studies of Islam. The regime realized that it could not stop the growth of female Islamic networks, so it tried to offer its own infrastructure to absorb the female Sunnis in search of Islamic studies.

The female Sufi order of the Kaftariyya has received strong support from the regime. Sheikh Kaftaru has always encouraged the education of girls and women and has urged them to participate actively in religious, political, and economic life. As early as the 1950s women were given a space in the old Abu al-Nur mosque to participate in lessons and in Friday prayers. Since then, Sheikh Kaftaru has trained two generations of female Sufis with his daughter, Sheikha Waffa Kaftaru, being the most prominent. She was trained for a sheikha career and a role of leadership by her father and other sheikhs and sheikhas. She heads most of the female branch of the Kaftariyya and was for many years the director of the ANIC schools and universities (Böttcher, 1998b: 129–31). Sheikh Kaftaru's second wife, Sabah al-Jabri, who married the sheikh after the death of his first wife in 1992, is gaining considerable influence within the female movement. The inner core of the female Kaftariyya is committed to *dawa*, raising the awareness of Muslims of their Islamic identity and the conversion of non-Muslims (Böttcher, 1998b: 131–37). They have spread all over Damascus and control official mosque teaching. By the end of the 1990s most of the lessons on Islam offered in mosques in and around Damascus were given by female disciples of Sheikh Kaftaru. Both his daughter and wife were appointed as official mosque teachers by the Ministry of Islamic Endowments, even though permanent positions are extremely limited and usually not available for women.

The growth of a female branch within the Kaftariyya was warmly welcomed by the regime. Their well-organized activities in Damascus aim to bring Islamic teaching out of private houses and into the public realm, into mosques, Quran institutes, and Islamic centers, thus reducing the opportunities for Sunni teachings critical of the regime.

Syria's First Islamic Forum

Under the presidency of Bashar al-Asad, about 70 forums debating political, social, and economic issues were held all over Syria. Most of them were hosted by secular intellectuals, businessmen, or politicians. In July 2001 Muhammad al-Habash, a prominent member of the Kaftariyya Sufi order, was allowed to open the first Islamic forum. He is married to one of the granddaughters of Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru and has made his career in the ANIC. With the help of Sheikh Kaftaru he later became director of Islamic Education in the Ministry of Islamic Endowments in Damascus. It is remarkable that Syria's Islamic forum is a Sufi one, led by a prominent Naqshbandi representing official Islam. By licensing it the regime is merely renaming its successful cooperation with the ANIC and marketing it to a broader public. Before forums became fashionable for a certain period in Syria the ANIC has de facto already been one of the few spaces in the country where conferences, talks, and discussions on Islam were organized for a handpicked audience.

The Khaznawiyya Sufi Order in Northeastern Syria

Another Kurdish Sufi sheikh from the Naqshbandi tradition, Sheikh Muhammad al-Khaznawi, attracts many followers in Syria. His Sufi order, the Khaznawiyya, has its headquarters in Tell Maaruf near Qamishly on the Turkish border. Like many other Kurds, his grandparents migrated to Syria from Turkey because of the liberal Islamic and Kurdish policies of the French mandate (van Bruinessen, 1998: 30). In 1969 Sheikh Muhammad took over the Sufi order from his father, Sheikh Izz al-Din (al-Arif billah, n.d.: 78). He had been initiated by Sheikh Junayd who trained a number of prominent Naqshbandi sheikhs in the Middle East. They later became leaders of influential Sufi networks in the Middle East and abroad.[11] In many ways the Khaznawiyya Sufi network resembles the Kaftariyya. Its Islamic school was founded in 1920 and recently a branch of al-Azhar University in Cairo was opened in its Islamic center. The wife of Sheikh Muhammad

al-Khaznawi, who is a trained sheikha, directs the female movement. The Khaznawiyya has a strong following among Kurds in the Middle East with branches all over the migrant Kurdish community in Europe and the United States (Qasim, 2001: 19). Most of its followers are Kurds and its headquarters is in the heart of Kurdistan.

Kurdish Islam as Syria's Official Islam

From the perspective of the Syrian Sunni establishment, a surprisingly high percentage of Kurds are very active in the politics of official Sunni Islam. The size and the organizational structure of the two Naqshbandi Sufi networks show that official Sunni Islam in Syria is to a large extent dominated by Sufi Islam of the Naqshbandi tradition and its propagators are mainly Kurds. Trained Sufis of Kurdish origin can be found in key positions in Islamic teaching, in the Ministry of Islamic Endowments, and in Syrian television. The Syrian Baathi regime under Hafiz al-Asad was frustrated with the Sunni Salafi establishment's strict refusal to cooperate. Syria's religious legitimacy and its image in the Islamic world have deteriorated as a result of the confrontations with the Muslim Brothers and Sisters. It was in desperate need of individuals and institutions to help improve this tarnished image and legitimize its religious and political power base. The regime's interest in Sufi orders of the Naqshbandi tradition developed gradually and its successful cooperation with the Kaftariyya encouraged an extension of this cooperation with other Sufi networks, in Lebanon, for example. For the leaders of the Sufi networks involved, this cooperation represented an opportunity to improve their poor economic and political situation. Leaders of powerful networks became mediators who can support their disciples in dealing with state institutions. These leaders also manage powerful economic networks providing social services and moral support.

One of the most prominent figures in the field of Islam is also a Kurd: Sheikh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti. He is close to the Naghbandiyya-oriented Sunni Islam in Syria, a current that is very strong. Over the decades he has published a large number of books on Islam and topics related to it, which are read with great enthusiasm by Sunni Muslims in Syria and abroad. He has trained a new generation of male and female Sunni Muslims at the Faculty of Sharia Law at the University of Damascus and as a preacher in a small mosque in the Kurdish quarter of Damascus. Among them is his son, who teaches at the same faculty. Salafi-oriented Islam is very critical of Sufism, but tolerates the Naqshbandiyya.

The decision to have Sunni Kurds dominate official Sunni Islam was made by Hafiz al-Asad in response to the refusal on the part of the *ulama* to cooperate with the authorities. Asad favored a "confessional minority," that is Sufis over Salafis, and an ethnic minority, the Kurds, over the Arabs. Those co-opted have little choice. In Syria, Kurds are the largest non-Arab ethnic minority, comprising about 4.3 percent of the population (Human Rights Watch, 1996). About 67,465 (according to Syrian government figures) to 200,000 (according to Kurdish sources) Kurds have been denied the right to Syrian nationality even if they were born in Syria (Meho, 1995: 37). Many of them are not permitted to own land, housing, or businesses. They cannot be employed by government agencies or state-owned enterprises and cannot practice as doctors or engineers. They are not eligible for food subsidies or admission to public hospitals. They cannot vote in elections or referendums or run for public offices. Their marriages to Syrian citizens are not legally recognized. Without passports or other internationally recognized travel documents, they are literally trapped in Syria (Human Rights Watch, 1996; Nida ul Islam Magazin, 1997). Given the situation of many Kurds in Syria and the Middle East (Meho, 1995: 38), powerful mediation and support can be secured through the adherence to an expanding Sufi network. Many Kurdish families and clans traditionally have ties to Naqshbandi and Qadiri Sufi networks and interest in reestablishing these ties is growing.

The Implementation of "Official Shiite Islam"

Many Syrian Sunnis do not consider Alawis to be Muslims because of the particularities of the Alawi religious doctrine. According to the Syrian constitution the president of Syria has to be a Muslim, but if Alawis are not accepted as Muslims, then the current president's political legitimacy is questionable (Donohue, 1972–1973: 81–96). For the ruling elite these confessional polemics represent a serious threat. One way of proving that Alawis are Muslims is to enforce the rapprochement between the schools of Islamic law, which is called *taqrib*. With regard to Alawis, *taqrib* underlines common traits between both the Twelver Shiite and the Alawi dogma and comes to the conclusion that Alawis are Shiites. These efforts date back to the Ottoman Empire and were revitalized by the French mandatory powers. In the 1950s some members of the Alawi religious hierarchy adopted certain organizational and legal concepts of Twelver Shiite

Islamic jurisprudence as a result of *taqrib*. Since Hafiz al-Asad's seizure of power, *taqrib* became the official policy (Kramer, 1987b: 239–46; Mervin, 2000: 321–27). With the Sunni religious establishment imposing the confessionalist paradigm on the definition of Islamic policies, Hafiz al-Asad had little choice. Syria's strategic role in the Middle East has provided it with credible partners for the implementation of its *taqrib*, namely the Twelver Shia of Iran and Lebanon. Around this triangle of military, economic, and political relationship among Syria, Iran, and Lebanon a complex set of ties with the Twelver Shiite international community is developing. The new Syrian president, Bashar al-Asad, continues his father's policies. He is even said to have a personal liking for Twelver Shiite Islam, especially Ayatollah Fadlallah's interpretation.[12]

Iranian Twelver Shiite Islam

In exchange for military and political support by the Iranian government, Hafiz al-Asad granted Iran considerable freedom for Twelver Shiite activities in Syria. The Iranian presence has often been explained by Syria's need for Islamic legitimacy but Iran has benefited more from this cooperation than Syria. Ties between the Syrian regime and members of the revolutionary Iranian establishment already existed, when the latter were still in opposition to the Shah (Kramer, 1987b: 250). For the Islamic Republic of Iran the generous offer to expand on Syrian territory came at a time when it was at war with Iraq. The most important religious sites for the Iranian Twelver Shia in Iraq, namely Karbala and Najaf, were not and still are not easily accessible. Iran saw an opportunity in Syria to fill the gap. Since the 1990s Iranian Twelver Shiite Islam has become very visible in Syria. With the help of local entrepreneurs, Twelver Shiite religious sites, such as Sayyida Zaynab on the outskirts of Damascus, Sayyida Ruqayya in the old city of Damascus, and Raqqa in the north of Syria, were developed into flourishing centers for pilgrimage, tourism, and religious studies. Each year these sites attract thousands of Shiite pilgrims from Iran and around the world. Throughout the year an endless stream of Shiite scholars and students come from Iran to visit Syria and Lebanon. Many of them tour the Shiite sites in Damascus and Aleppo and then continue through the Bekaa valley to Beirut and South Lebanon. Since the mid-1990s pilgrimages (*hamlat*) have also been arranged for Lebanese Twelver Shiites to visit Syria on special occasions, such as the commemoration of a birthday or of the death of one of the twelve imams. Large markets selling books, household items, and religious objects,

have grown around the Syrian religious sites. Hundreds of students and scholars of Twelver Shiite theology and jurisprudence have settled and founded a number of publishing houses and theological institutes, most notably in Sayyida Zaynab. The growing infrastructure also hosts exiled Twelver Shiites from Iraq and the Gulf.

The activities of the Iranian Twelver Shiites in Syria are coordinated and controlled by the Iranian Embassy and the Iranian Cultural Center in Damascus. The Iranian Embassy depends on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Teheran. It is also the main decision-making center for Iranian affairs in Lebanon with the Beirut Iranian Embassy playing a minor role. The strained relationship between these two Iranian embassies has caused many tensions. The post of the Iranian ambassador in Beirut remained vacant for some time because no diplomat wanted to work under these conditions. The Iranian Cultural Center in Damascus deals with religious and cultural matters and depends on the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Teheran. Activities concerned with *taqrib* are coordinated by the Iranian Cultural Center. For the past decade it has organized Quran exhibitions, Quran recitation competitions, lectures, and big conferences. In commemoration of Ayatollah Khomeini's death a big Islamic conference is organized each year. For this occasion hundreds of leading Muslim and Islamist activists and opposition leaders from all over the Islamic world are invited to Damascus to present lectures. In the mid-1990s, the Iranian diplomatic representation slowly changed policies. Followers of President Khatami started to take over and Syrian–Iranian cooperation in cultural matters was redefined.

Lebanese Twelver Shiite Islam in Syria

While officially an Iranian ally, Syria's regime tries to counterbalance Iranian influence in Syria and the Middle East by giving space to Arab Twelver Shia. One way is to give Arab Twelver Shiite *ulama* from Iraq, the Gulf, and Lebanon an opportunity to teach, write, and publish in Syria. Among them are the followers of Ayatollah Muhammad al-Shirazi and his brother Hasan, who own a number of publishing houses and bookshops in Syria and Lebanon. Through them they print and publish works of the ayatollah and his disciples, such as Hasan al-Shirazi, Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrisi, and Hadi al-Mudarrisi, all of them from Kerbala in Iraq (Rosiny, 2000: 27). Hasan al-Shirazi fled from Kerbala to Lebanon in 1970 and taught there. He was murdered in Beirut in 1980. He seems to have been a supporter of the *taqrib* between Syrian Alawis and Twelver Shiites (Kramer, 1987b: 249).

With Syria in control of Lebanon since 1976, Syrian policies concerning official Islam have included Lebanese territory as well. For those networks that support the Syrian regime, this means privileged access to the Lebanese territory as a new market for transnational expansion.

Since the 1970s Syrian state-sponsored Islam has been exported to Lebanon. Sheikh Kaftaru's presence in Lebanon dates back to 1969, when he sent one of his most trusted disciples, Sheikh Rajab Dib, on a teaching mission to Beirut during the month of Ramadan. Sheikh Rajab returned every week to Beirut for a number of years to teach and build a Sufi network. This sub-network of the Kaftariyya was later named the Rajabiyya and it is currently directed by Sheikh Muhammad Ziyat al-Sahib. He was trained in the ANIC in Damascus and is married to one of Sheikh Rajab's daughters. The Rajabiyya has a welfare organization, a health club, schools, and mosques. Since the end of the civil war in Lebanon in 1990, many Kurds in Lebanon have rediscovered their Sufi heritage. When Sheikh Muhammad al-Khaznawi visited Beirut for the first time in the mid-1990s, a large crowd came to see him; later many followed him to Syria to take the oath from him and some stayed to study with him.

By the same token, Syria's tight military, political, and economic grip on Lebanon since 1976 is an essential prerequisite for the co-optation of "Lebanese" Islam in the Syrian domestic scene. Syrian control over Lebanese policy-making has facilitated Iranian and Syrian support for Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements, most notably Hizballah (Ranstorp, 1997: 30–38 and 45–70). It has also helped to organize the resurgent Lebanese Twelver Shiite community. The Twelver Shia in Lebanon was a confessional group with no organizational structure or influence on the political and economic decision-making processes in their own country. Disregarding the presence of a number of very influential and rich Shiite landholding families, such as the Usayrans or the Asads, who have always held high-ranking political positions (Osseyran, 1997: 14–73), the majority of Twelver Shiites in South Lebanon, the Bekaa valley, and the southern suburbs of Beirut, lived in misery. The confessional system gave them practically no access to the educational and political system. It was not until Musa al-Sadr, an Iranian cleric, settled in Lebanon in 1959 that the Shiites started to organize themselves. He united the Twelver Shia of Lebanon into a political movement and founded the Higher Shia Council, an institution guaranteeing Shiite autonomy (Ajami, 1986). He also incorporated about 20,000 Alawis from Tripoli and the Akkar into the Twelver

Shiite organizational structure (Kramer, 1987b: 246–49). With his disappearance in Libya in 1978, the Shiite lost their most charismatic figure. His organization was divided between two men. Nabih Barri became AMAL's[13] new leader. Born in Sierra Leone, he is a lawyer and self-made man. He was a member of the Baath Party and enjoys very good relations with Syria and to a lesser extent with Iran. Ayatollah Shams al-Din became the vice president of the Higher Shiite Council. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was a turning point for Lebanon's Islamic community in general and its Twelver Shiite community in particular, because the establishment of a Shiite Islamic republic contributed to Islamic self-assertion. Three years later, Israel invaded Lebanon. Even though the threat of the PLO using Lebanon as a territory from which to attack Israel was eliminated, Israel's political and strategic calculations went completely wrong. The Twelver Shiite population refused to cooperate with the Israeli occupational forces and instead a resistance movement grew, which was later taken over by a radical wing of AMAL, Islamic AMAL. This was the beginning of Hizballah.

Hizballah's emergence is closely connected to the career of its spiritual guide, Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah. The Fadlallah family is originally from Aynata in South Lebanon. Ayatollah Fadlallah's father studied in Najaf until he reached the level of *mujtahid*. He was born in Najaf and studied first with his father and uncle. Later he joined such famous clerics as Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khui (al-Surur, 1992: 33–44). After short visits to his home country in the 1950s and 1960s, Ayatollah Fadlallah returned to Beirut in 1966 and settled in Naba, a poor neighborhood in East Beirut (al-Surur, 1992: 54–56). He taught and worked there without attracting much attention. After the Israeli invasion in Lebanon of 1982 he was forced to leave East Beirut. Finally he settled in Bir Abed, a southern suburb of Beirut, where he taught and preached in a small mosque. After a spectacular bomb attack, which almost cost him his life, he moved for security reasons to a neighboring area called Harat Hraik. There he built a huge mosque complex that included the Bahman hospital, a foreign relations office, a cultural center, and a library. His interpretation of Twelver Shiite Islam as a "theology of liberation" in a political and theological sense, his critical political analysis of Israeli, United States, and European politics in the Middle East, and his charismatic appeal made him the most influential religious figure in the Twelver Shiite community in Lebanon and abroad. His political analysis and *fatwas* are the cornerstones of Hizballah's religious and political

legitimization. He strongly supports the Lebanese–Syrian–Iranian triangle. During his Friday sermons on January 26, 2001, he said:

> I would also like to welcome the strategic relations between Syria and Iran that have become well established as they serve both Arab and Muslim interests, especially those of the Lebanese. The two countries stand together to support the Lebanese people's struggle against occupation. In addition, Iran supports Syria in liberating their occupied lands (the Golan Heights) and the Palestinian Intifada that aims at liberating the occupied Palestinian lands and the sacred shrines that belong to all Muslims.[14]

Like Hizballah, Ayatollah Fadlallah is very cautious when it comes to criticizing Syrian policies. Many members of Hizballah flock into his mosque in Harat Hraik in the south of Beirut to attend his lessons and sermons. His office and the headquarters of his social and religious network are also not far from the mosque. The secretary general of Hizballah, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, is his next-door neighbor. Like many other activists in Hizballah, Sayyid Nasrallah studied with the ayatollah during the 1970s. Until recently the deputy secretary general of Hizballah, Sheikh Naim al-Qasim, attended the *dars al-kharij*, which takes place five days a week in the early morning hours in the private house of the ayatollah. It is reserved for the most advanced among the sheikhs and deals with highly specialized matters of Twelver Shiite Islamic jurisprudence.

Ayatollah Fadlallah's discipline and his uncompromising attitude toward money and political power gained him a large following in Lebanon and abroad. Every year at least one book is published by him or his students; his books are widely read and have gained him a reputation as an open-minded Twelver Shiite scholar. The publication of his *Risala Amiliyya* earned him an undisputed religious legitimization as a top-level cleric (*marja*). A *marja*'s judgment in questions pertaining to the application of Shiite law is considered trustworthy by millions of Shiites around the world (Fadlallah, 2001). At the same time, his rank represented a threat to the political elites in power in Iran, who would prefer to have the *marjaiyya* conferred on an Iranian ayatollah under their control rather than on an Arab dignitary from Lebanon. For some time Ayatollah Fadlallah's relations with certain influential currents among the Iranian clerics have been deteriorating and subsequently his relations with Hizballah (Ranstorp, 1997: 43). Even though Ayatollah Fadlallah is the spiritual guide of Hizballah,

the party cannot risk losing Iranian support, which is so vital to its political and military survival. Anyone claiming to have attained the *marja* level and representing the *marjaiyya* deprives other *marja*'s of their share of Shiite alms, among them the *huquq shariyya* and the *khums*. The more followers a *marja* has, the larger the sum he receives to finance his projects and network. It amounts to millions of dollars. Ayatollah Fadlallah's reputation as an open-minded *marja* makes him very popular among Twelver Shiites especially businessmen, who donate large sums of money for his projects. Since the reelection of President Sayyid Khatami in June 2001, relations between Ayatollah Fadlallah and the Iranian government have improved.

The Ayatollah spends two and half days a week in Sayyida Zaynab where he takes a rest from his stressful daily routine in Beirut and teaches his students. Western political analysts perceive his presence in Syria as politically motivated because of his relations with Hizballah (Kramer, 1987a: 11–16) and his staunch support of the strategic triangle of Syria, Iran, and Lebanon. However, interpreting Ayatollah Fadlallah's presence in Syria solely as a component of a military and political alliance would not do justice to the heritage of a long tradition of Arab Twelver Shiite culture and religion in the region of Syria, previously called Bilad al-Sham. Ayatollah Fadlallah feels the responsibility of continuing the educational work of Muhsin al-Amin (1867–1952), one of the most outstanding scholars and reformers of the Lebanese Shiite community. Muhsin al-Amin studied in Najaf and later lived in Damascus for over fifty years (Mervin, 2000: 161–75; Ajami, 1986: 76–84).

Over the years the Ayatollah has established his own infrastructure in Sayyida Zaynab. In 1992 he founded the institute for higher theological studies for male students, the *Hawzat Murtada*. Four years later a branch for female students was inaugurated. The institute hosts 90 male students from all over the Islamic world and 150 female students from Syria, Lebanon, and Iran. In 1996 the institutes moved into their own building, a modest two-storey cement building behind the mosque complex of Sayyida Zaynab, financed by the private donation of a rich Kuwaiti Shiite. Monthly expenses are covered by the Beirut-based Mabarrat welfare organization of the Ayatollah.[15] Neither the Syrian Ministry of Islamic Endowments nor the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education has a say in the institute's organization or teaching curricula. During Ayatollah Fadlallah's weekly visits to Syria, he also gives lectures throughout the country. These are well received, especially among high-ranking Alawi military officers. Sons

of leading Alawi families from Lattakia study in the ayatollah's institutes of Shiite jurisprudence and theology in Beirut and thus continue a tradition of Alawi learning in Twelver Shiite institutions of higher studies in these subjects (Kramer, 1987b: 243).

Conclusion

The Syrian regime has given tightly controlled spaces to a chosen few, to whom it entrusted the management of official Islam. Under Hafiz al-Asad the regime was confronted by a boycott by the Sunni religious establishment and had to find support among the Kurds. A number of Kurdish sheikhs and networks were co-opted to propagate their version of Sunni Sufi Islam in Syria and abroad: the Kaftariyya headed by Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru, the Khaznawiyya led by Sheikh Muhammad al-Khaznawi and Sheikh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti.

The political involvement in the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon, opened new horizons for cooperation with the Lebanese Twelver Shiites. Based on a successful political and military cooperation between Syria, Lebanon, and Iran, Twelver Shiite Islam was given more and more room to expand in Syria. For religious cooperation the Syrian regime relies mainly on the Iranian Embassy and the Iranian Cultural Center in Damascus and Ayatollah Fadlallah in Lebanon. The strong emphasis on Sufi and Twelver Shiite Islam shows that Syria's official Islam does not meet the demands of the majority of its Sunni population and that is has little to contribute to the regime's Islamic legitimization. Even Bashar al-Asad, who seems to encourage more political, economic, and social participation in decision-making processes, has not succeeded in defining a politics of Islam for his own population. If these persuasive policies of official Islam were not complemented by very effective repressive measures there would be no political stability in Syria.

Notes

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1. For more information on the Naqshbandiyya, see Algar (1976), Gaborieau et al. (1990), and Özdalga (1999).

2. Alawis consider themselves to be Shiites. The Shiite imams are highly venerated in Alawi esoteric teaching. For more details, see Halm (1982: 284–355; 1988: 186–92) and Moosa (1988).
3. Alasdair Drysdale, "The Asad Regime and Its Troubles," *MERIP*, 110 (1982): 3. For a perception of this "reality," see Faksh (1984) and Rabinovich (1979).
4. For an excellent account of these polemics, see Voss (1987).
5. Salafi Islam tries to religiously, socially, politically, and economically revive the Islam of the *al-salaf al-salih*, the pious forefathers, namely the Prophet Muhammad and his followers. The Salafi Islam interpretation was inspired by the thirteenth-century Hanbali scholar Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328). A radical version of Salafi Islam was developed in the Hijaz by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1791) in a political joint-venture with the Saud family. This radical version of Salafi Islam is known as Wahhabi Islam.
6. For Nigeria see Loimeier (1993); for Central Asia see Cross (1999); and for Turkey see Agai (2001).
7. This section relies mainly on my previous research, see Böttcher (1998a).
8. Sunni Muslim Kurds usually belong to the Shafii school of law.
9. This tiny little institution is located in West Beirut near the Lebanese University. It was founded by *al-Markaz al-Islami li-al-Tarbiyya* (Islamic center for education) in 1976 in order to "meet the need of an university in the Islamic and Arab world that takes care of Islam and its implementation in various fields of life." Surprisingly, the headquarters in Beirut has educated some of the most radical Sufi and Wahhabi Islamist leaders in Lebanon, including some Palestinian sheikhs connected to the Usbat al-Ansar group (Rougier, 2001). See also chapter six of this book.
10. See http://www.collegeofmaqasid.org/summerprogram.
11. One of his students is the prominent Palestinian Naqshbandi Sheikh Ibrahim Ghunaim, who has a large following in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.
12. In June 2001 in an interview with French television he mistakenly used the Shiite formula *salla allahu alayhi wa-alihi*, which is used by practicing Shiites when they mention the name of the Prophet Muhammad.
13. AMAL means *hope* in Arabic and is the acronym for Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnaniyya (Lebanese Resistance Detachments). Initially the name was given to the military arm of the "Movement of the Disinherited" that Imam Musa as-Sadr founded in 1974 in order to promote Shiite interests in Lebanon.
14. Friday sermon, January 26, 2001, Beirut; see on-line http://www.bayynat.org.
15. Informal talk with Sayyid Sharif Sayyid al-Amili in south Beirut, June 1999.

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al-Arif billah al-alama al-Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Khaznawi, n.p.

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Chapter 6



Religious Mobilizations in Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon: The Case of Ain al-Helweh

Bernard Rougier

Introduction

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the main popular support of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) during the late 1960s and 1970s, have been experiencing new forms of religious mobilization. These not only denounce the political achievements of the PLO as epitomized in the Oslo agreement of September 1993, but also call into question the modern national consciousness built up by the PLO since its creation in the mid-1960s. While Islamist organizations in the occupied territories, *hamas* or Islamic *jihad*, might be seen as an extension of the nationalistic struggle against the Israeli occupation phrased in religious terms, the religious mobilization in the Palestinian camps located in Lebanon violently rejects the principal components of Palestinian nationalism such as a common memory arising from the aftermath of the traumatic experiences of 1948, a feeling of belonging to a specific national community whose homeland is Palestine, or a common perception of the enemy.

In spite of their differences and occasional conflicts, the religious figures that lead these local movements are united by a shared hostility to any kind of national and territorial claims strictly limited to Palestine. The political process of forging a new identity based upon religious constructs is particularly acute in Ain al-Helweh, the largest Palestinian camp in Lebanon. With its 40,000 refugees, Ain al-Helweh is located in the suburb of the Sunni Muslim town of Saida in the southern part of the country. In the "Palestinian capital of Lebanon," as the camp is sometimes called, a Salafi version of Islam currently dominates the religious spectrum.[1] Its supporters, entrenched in the numerous alleys (*zawarib*) of the camp, are politically and militarily strong enough to challenge the main pillar of the PLO, the Fatah, which has been striving hard to regain some of its lost influence against the socially active fundamentalist networks. This situation of internal conflict is all the more surprising as the Palestinians are collectively facing a very difficult situation in Lebanon. They are legally excluded by restrictive legislation from almost every kind of job opportunity and deprived of any social protection, with the exception of the diminishing services provided by the United Nation's Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNWRA). Nevertheless, in spite of these objective constraints and difficulties, the camp is politically more fragmented than ever, and the symbolic fight for identity, as well as the intense competition between the tools of socialization, may very well evolve into the first open military conflict between Palestinian refugees involving both the local leadership and the common people. This possibility is in itself an indication of the deep cleavages dividing the deprived "Palestinian society" in Lebanon.

This chapter tries to explain how and why the Palestinian sense of identity has begun to dissolve in the largest Palestinian camp in Lebanon. Moreover, it examines the social and political processes that have facilitated a new perception of "self" and "other" among certain segments of Palestinian refugees in Ain al-Helweh. It will formulate hypotheses concerning the relevance of the "interpretative frames" by which Palestinian refugees are attempting to account for the causes of the very stressful situation they are experiencing. Finally, it poses the question of how a threat that was once external to Palestinian society has also become an internal threat as a result of those processes.

While the camp appears to be a hotbed of "new Muslim radicalism" at the "margin of the Muslim world," it is evident that the actors who are promoting this new radical approach maintain links with major segments of the Lebanese Sunni branch of Islam (they may even be considered as an extension of the latter). Some of the

militants have even left the camps, thereby illustrating their refusal to remain on the margin, as well as their desire to assume the status of major players by their involvement in the future of Sunni religious movements in the area.

Religious Networks and the Symbolic Production of Values and Representations

The Growth of a Salafi Version of Islam in Ain al-Helweh in the Beginning of the 1990s

It is difficult to trace with any precision the different stages of the rise of a Salafi type of Islam in the recent history of the Ain al-Helweh camp. During the Israeli invasion of 1982, "the defenders were led by Muslim sheiks, spearheaded by the *ashbal* (tiger clubs: the name given to young fighters) wielding deadly RPG antitank weapons at close quarters against Israeli armor" (Khalidi, 1986: 51). The heroic resistance of Ain al-Helweh to the Israeli army—the "Massada of the Palestinians" (cf. Schiff and Yaari, 1984)—gave rise to the most ferocious combats of the invasion. The Islamic militants who were in charge of defending the camp were almost all students of the Palestinian Sheikh Ibrahim Ghunaim. During the conflict, Ghunaim was traveling in Iran but he lost a son during the siege of the camp. His life story provides an excellent example of the multifaceted changes in the Islamic movements of Ain al-Helweh.

Sheikh Ghunaim was born in 1924 to a farming family living in the village of Safuriyya in the former Ottoman district of Nazareth. Compelled to flee Palestine with his young illiterate wife in 1948, he moved to the popular quarter known as the "slaughterhouse" (*al-maslakh*) in the eastern part of Beirut where he took a job as a simple worker in a cement factory. In the early 1950s, he became a member of the Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhood through a student of Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Junaid who set up a local lodge (*zawiyya*) in the neighborhood. He met the spiritual leader (*murshid*) of the brotherhood in Aleppo in 1953 and was offered a religious teaching position in the small village of Akkar in northern Lebanon. In 1963, Sheikh Ghunaim moved to the Ain al-Helweh Palestinian camp that became the main center for the brotherhood in Saida. He began teaching at the al-Nur mosque and his students from that period later became the main proponents of radical Islam in the camp. Traveling in Teheran during the Israeli invasion of 1982, he settled in the Nahr al-Bared camp near Tripoli upon his return to Lebanon. In the same

year, he was interned in Syria for two months in the Mezze prison for his presumed links with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which was in opposition to the regime of Hafiz al-Asad. After being released, he placed himself under the protection of the Iranian government, who saw him as a means of getting access to the Palestinian camps. In 1984, Ghunaim helped to create the Fighting Islamic Movement (*harakat al-islamiyya al-mujahada*) with the cooperation of Sheikh Jamal al-Khattab and Sheikh Abdallah Hallaq. With the support of the Iranian embassy, he directed the building of the al-Quds mosque in the Nahr-al-Bared camp and moved into a modest apartment in the basement of the mosque. During the 1990s, he was careful to participate in all the ceremonies organized by the Hizballah regarding the political future of Palestine.[2] The political commitments of Sheikh Ghunaim show that there is no distinct opposition between popular Islam as expressed through Sufism and radical Islamism. According to him, "if someone who does not respect sharia performs *karamat* (miracles), those *karamat* are satanic *karamat*." In addition, he emphasizes the importance of armed struggle, with the "Jihad against the Jews" as the number one priority. Of note is the sheikh's membership in the order of Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, a brotherhood that distinguishes itself from other mystical orders by its focus on the strict obedience to Islamic law, the rejection of blameworthy innovations, and the return to the model of perfection illustrated by the Prophet and his companions.

One of Sheikh Ghunaim's former students, Hisham Abdallah Shraidi, active in the defense of the camp during the June 1982 invasion, was made prisoner by the Israelis and incarcerated in the *Ansar* prison for a year and a half. During his detention, Hisham Shraidi made many contacts that later served him on the local Lebanese scene. Released during a prisoner exchange, the former fish merchant became a preacher (*khatib*) in a mosque located in the Ain al-Helweh camp. The members of his group date the founding of the "League of Partisans" (*Usbat al-Ansar*) in 1985 at the initiative of "Sheikh" Shraidi. In reality, however, at that time the organization was not known under that name but was actually called "The Partisans of God" (*Ansar Allah*). The difference is not merely a semantic one. At this point in time, the group was very close to Iranian networks and combined its military operations with the Shiite militia Hizballah. After having benefited from the logistical support of the PLO during the Islamic Revolution of 1978, Iranian leaders nevertheless sought to fight against the influence of the PLO by establishing religious networks in the Palestinian camps. These networks denounced the

"diplomacy of capitulation" of Yasir Arafat and they encouraged the armed struggle against the "Zionist entity." The Partisans of God also participated in the fight against the Christian Lebanese Forces in 1985 in areas still controlled by the Christian militia to the east of Saida, using this occasion to reaffirm a common Islamic identity with the Muslim population of the region against the "Maronite–Zionist conspiracy." Following the assassination of Sheikh Hisham on December 15, 1991, the crowd that gathered for the funeral spontaneously blamed Fatah for the murder, shouting that "Abu Ammar [Arafat] is the enemy of God."[3] The members of the Islamist networks, however, considered the murder as part of the broader context of a "campaign led against the Jihad movement in the Arab and Islamic world, because the murder of Sheikh Hisham has occurred at the same time as the arrest of Islamic supporters in Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco." At this time, the successor of Sheikh Hisham Shraidi, Abu Mahjen, declared that "the death of the sheikh has strengthened our determination to seek out the truth."[4] Although the sheikh's supporters claim to be faithful to the memory of their late leader and pretend to continue his work, they have deviated from the initial aims of the organization by giving it a Salafist orientation that it initially did not have. They refused Iranian support, justified this decision as a result of the sectarian incompatibility between Sunnis and Shiites, and redirected the group's operations to areas far from the Lebanese–Israeli frontier.

Empowerment Rationales: The Defense of the Sunni Branch of Islam in the Middle East

Sheikh Hisham was succeeded by Abdel Karim Saidi—better known under his nickname (*laqab*) Abu Mahjen—as leader of the group, which then became the "League of Partisans" instead of the "Partisans of God." Abu Mahjen was also a former student of Sheikh Ghunaim and it is very likely that a council (*majlis*) composed of the latter's former students agreed to award him this position of responsibility even though he was only 28 years old when he became the head of the religious militia. Born in the village of Safsaf near Safad, Abu Mahjen's family, like that of his predecessor, suffered a series of exoduses and uprootings, almost always the consequence of the violence of war. In 1948, with the creation of the Israeli state, his parents were compelled to leave Galilee to find refuge in the West Bank (Abdel Karim was born there in 1963). Then, during the Six-Day War in June 1967, the family had to flee once again, this

time moving to Jordan, from where they left again in 1971 for Lebanon in order to escape Jordanian repression in the aftermath of Black September. After a brief stay in the Nahr al-Bared camp near Tripoli, the family moved permanently to Ain al-Helweh, where most of the original inhabitants of Safsaf (one of the camp neighborhoods is even known by the name of that village) were harbored. Abd al-Karim Saidi made his living in a series of temporary jobs before becoming a professional of *jihadi* Islamism. At the age of 20, for example, he was selling *shawarma* on the Saida Cornish. These biographical facts give an excellent idea of the social universe of the individuals that make up the core group of the Usbat and the material benefits they were to reap thanks to their commitment to radical Islam during the early 1990s.

Abu Mahjen's name became publicly known following a death sentence that a Lebanese court pronounced against him in absentia on January 17, 1997. He was sentenced for murdering the leader of the Ahbash brotherhood, Sheikh Nizar al-Halabi, on August 31, 1995 in Beirut. The Ahbash brotherhood (the "Society for Islamic Philanthropic Projects") appears to be the reverse image of the Sunni opposition movements whose doctrinal references and historical figures and claims they seek to discredit.[5] The organization often uses the same recruitment and mobilization methods and seeks to attract the same social groups as the Muslim Brotherhood. Thanks to their privileged relationship with the Syrian intelligence services, which seek to limit the influence of Islamic movements in Lebanon, in the early 1980s the Ahbash took over many mosques in the neighborhoods of Burj Abu Haidar, Zuqqaq al-Blat, and Basta Fawqa in West Beirut. On each occasion the mosques were entered by force, using means of intimidation in spite of the protests of Dar al-Fatwa, the official body for the Sunni branch of Islam in Lebanon that is still attempting to regain control of these religious sites. In southern Lebanon, the Ahbash established their regional center in Ain al-Helweh in the early 1990s by building a monumental mosque (called Salah ad-Din), and they have been accused of "purchasing members" by providing social assistance to the destitute.

Their choice of location was not accidental. By investing first and foremost in the poorer Sunni quarters, as was the case in the capital, the Ahbash choose to confront their ideological enemy on their own terrain. Faced with the militant Ahbash offensive, Abu Mahjen began to take advantage of the helplessness of Dar al-Fatwa and the frustrations experienced by certain segments of the Sunni community to take on an all-important mission: the defense of Sunni Islam in

Lebanon. The assassination of Sheikh Halabi was considered an ideological victory for the Usbat, who were able to gain exposure by linking their own interests to those of a much larger community. The indignation that arose in Islamic communities due to the death sentence pronounced against the three alleged assassins of Nizar al-Halabi on March 24, 1998 held in the Rumieh prison provides an example. The young martyrs (*shuhada*) were executed because the Mufti of the Republic, Sheikh Rashid Qabbani, did not properly perform his function as a "defender of Islam." Instead of defending his community against those who "attacked it by spreading discord" (*fitna*), he behaved like a timid and ineffective bureaucrat. His lack of leadership "forced" the young Sunnis to take over his religious responsibility as "defender of the Good and the bane of Evil."[6] In Ain al-Helweh, the fight against the Ahbash lead to an exaggeration of Sunni identity while creating militant networks with new boundaries in terms of politics and identity. The transposition into the camp of a division typical of radical Lebanese Islamic movements (the "Brothers" against the "Ethiopians"), as well as the strength of this perception among the camp's inhabitants, can be analyzed as an indicator, for at least one segment of the refugee population, of the relative decline in the intensity of Palestinian identity (in the sense that it no longer serves as a filter for conflicts from the outside), and as an investment in issues that have nothing to do with the Palestinian cause.[7]

For the Islamic movements in Ain al-Helweh, the fight against the Ahbash brotherhood was, first of all, a confirmation of the group's break with Hizballah and Iran following the assassination of Sheikh Shraidi. It became contradictory to focus energy on the theme of the defense of the Sunni community while still maintaining overly obvious links with the political representatives of radical Shiite Islam in Lebanon. By giving priority to the anti-Habashi struggle, and by transforming what was originally only a military appendage of the Hizballah in Ain al-Helweh into a religious militia at the service of the radical Sunni movement, Usbat al-Ansar militants left the world of the Palestinian revolution and entered another theater of struggle by identifying with another model of mobilization. The assassination of Nizar al-Halabi represented an event whose international repercussions in the Islamic world helped make the group known outside Lebanese borders. By successfully completing this process, Usbat members acquired the financial support that enabled them to free themselves from their former Iranian tutors. In this way, they acquired a more widespread reputation within Ain al-Helweh and

were able to attract some of the youth of the camp, in particular, amongst those who were socially at a loose end since the end of the Lebanese war and politically disoriented by the signature of the Oslo agreements and the complex maze of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations.

By using the defense of Sunni Islam, the new Salafi militants of Ain al-Helweh sought to recreate a moral justification for their actions. The abandonment of armed struggle under local and international pressure deprived the refugees in Lebanon of an outlet. The function of this outlet was not so much a concrete contribution to reconquering Palestine as the affirmation, by taking up arms, of a common Palestinian identity that is connected with a specific territory and transcending their history of random dispersal throughout Arab countries (cf. Sayigh, 1997). On a micro level, by emphasizing the true believers' urgent obligation to act, the *jihadi* preachers subverted this link by no longer recommending national armed struggle but rather inciting the faithful to commit violent acts unrelated to any territorial imperative. Thus, for Sheikh Yussef, who is the *khatib* of the two mosques controlled directly by Usbat, prayer is only effective if accompanied by concrete actions in the service of *jihad*:

> Prayer alone is not enough . . . it must be accompanied by Jihad against the enemies of God, the enemies of Islam and Muslims who rape, kill, and soil our earth. The Jihad is even more urgent in that now Islam itself is in danger from Muslims themselves, those who have destroyed their religious heritage: Where is the Tradition (*sunna*) of the Prophet of God today? Where is it? I can see only reprehensible innovations (*bida*), only fables (*kurafat*). All I can see is only corruption (*fasad*), deviant meetings.[8]

Redefined and aimed at new targets, no longer directed to reconquering a territory, violence now means something other than armed struggle. These operations contribute to a redefinition of the group's boundaries by making a segment of the Palestinian population the uncompromising guardians of standards of religious morality both in the camp and in areas of Lebanon with a high density of Sunni Muslims. In this sense, the phenomenon is similar to a form of violence defined by Michel Wievorka as "metapolitical," that is, violence where "the political stakes are both combined with and subordinate to other issues defined in cultural terms, such as religious faith, that can tolerate no concessions."[9]

This aggressive definition of self inevitably leads to an exacerbation of sectarian tensions (*madhhabiya*), which is manifested by a violent

rejection of Shiism and its exuberant public displays of religious devotion. Commenting upon the Shiite Ashura manifestations commemorating the martyrdom of the Imam Husain, Sheikh Yussef stigmatizes:

> All those who pretend to cry for him today: they are crying not out of sadness but rather because they want to maintain the resentment and sectarian divisions (*naarat*) and make others believe that they are persecuted and that they have nothing. What is our responsibility for what happened? [I.e., for the death of Husain] Why do these people mass together when at that time there were neither Sunnis nor Shiites? The truth is that those who curse the Companions (*al-sahabat*) are cursed themselves.[10]

The struggle against the Lebanese state would have as one of its consequences, as was also the case with Islamist militants in Upper Egypt, murderous attacks against traffic police (as occurred in Saida). The defense of Islam would lead to dynamiting shops where alcohol was sold, and in certain cases, the murder of their owners. In addition to not obeying the Law of God, Arab regimes are accused of protecting Israel by playing the role of "border guards of the Zionist entity" and impeding any military incursion against it. In this context, one needs to find another place or another cause to fight for, no matter how far away it is from Palestine. This last argument legitimates the claim of the Salafi ideologues to qualify different kind of stakes, especially those which give them the capacity of acting. Hence, they create a difference in a depressed Palestinian context marked by an inflation of discourses, in particular during the routinized Palestinian celebrations that punctuate the political life in the camps. In spite of the existence of an "Islamic Resistance" in South Lebanon, many consider that the game is "rigged" and that the so-called resistance is designed to serve both the political purposes of Hizballah and Syria in Lebanon and in the region as a whole. Moreover, the front with Israel is precluded by Hizballah, which is seen as a non-trustworthy Shiite organization.

Religious Networks and Financial Pragmatism

The structure of the Islamic spectrum at Ain al-Helweh provides a means of understanding the influence of outside funding on the ways identity and political affiliations are expressed, as well as the stratagems employed by various actors to circumvent any constraints. Aside from the Ahbash network, as we have seen, three other religious networks

are implanted in the Palestinians camps in Lebanon: the “Fighting Islamic Movement” (*harakat al-islamiyya al-mujahadat*) founded by Ibrahim Ghunaim and Jamal al-Khattab, the “League of Partisans” (*usbat al-ansar*), and a Palestinian branch of the Lebanese Muslims Brotherhood. Wishing to present themselves to the outside world as a grass roots, charitable, and cultural organization, the leaders of the Fighting Islamic Movement founded an association called “the Guide” (*murshid*), which manages a network of schools and training centers in the Palestinian camps. The apparent diversity of political orientations among leading Murshid figures is surprising, as is their ability to attract funding from a remarkably wide variety of sources. While the older generation, such as Sheikh Ghunaim, claim membership in the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood, the younger generation in their forties rejects any links with Sufism and maintains relations with funding sources ranging from Iranian government organizations to private Kuwaiti support. An anecdote from Sheikh Ghunaim illustrates the way they bypass the conditions that these outside supporters try to impose:

> There was financing available from Kuwait, Salafi funding. When they found out that I was a Sufi, they discontinued aid. So we created a committee managed by Sheikh Jamal, and the funding was reinstated! We did this in the interest of the orphans![11]

By multiplying networks that often connect a few persons, and giving each one a specific name, the religious leaders set up a protective screen between social and militant action while circulating funding from one group to the other. Moreover, this technique also provides a way to multiply the number of outside representatives seeking to determine the religious orientations of organizations receiving aid. A pragmatic way to cast the net wide involves presentations of an appropriate profile to each financial supporter “in the interest of the orphans.” In a more basic sense, these financial settings support a veritable Islamic economy in the Palestinians camps. Becoming financially independent and having created and diversified their own survival techniques, the religious actors no longer have any practical reason to identify themselves with the discriminatory and demeaning status of a Palestinian refugee in order to get access to international funding from either public or private sources.

According to young students of Murshid, if they want to recover their former glory, the Muslims ought to mobilize the Muslim world by emphasizing the real nature of the conflict with the West, which is, not surprisingly, a conflict of civilization (*as-siraa huwwa*

bi-haqiqatihi dini aqidi hadari). If Muslims today are divided into so many political entities, if their rulers have never succeeded in achieving any real unity, it is because they have removed themselves intentionally from the Koran and the Sunna, "which represent the only possible strategic agenda" for fighting the enemy (i.e. "the international Jewry, the international Crusade, the regimes in the Muslim World who do not rule according to the Law of God").[12] Once they have fulfilled these conditions, the Muslims will be able to liberate "the land of Islam" by building an Islamic state whose territorial location would be irrelevant, as far as the first duty of the believer is the implementation of the rule of God on earth (*iqamat hukm allah fi al-ard*).[13] Up to now, this state does not exist and the Saudi state cannot pretend to be an Islamic one since the Saud family has lost all its Islamic credentials for having hosted American troops on its holy soil during the first Gulf War. One month after the opening of the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1990, the cover of the publication of the local Islamic review, *al-Hidayat*, showed a Jew holding a birdcage encapsulating the Haram al-Sharif next to a Saudi sheikh holding another cage with the Kaaba inside, an image fusing Israelis and Saudis to a common enemy of Islam.[14] The Madrid Peace Conference was perceived as another Balfour Declaration and the Arab regimes would be revealing their own impiety if they were to make peace with the Jews. Therefore the only solution would be to intensify the *jihad* (*tasid al-jihad*) by returning to the original form of Islam (*al-islam al-asil*). Since the terror attacks of September 11, all these themes have become familiar to the Western audience, but it is noteworthy that such ideas were circulating in the Palestinian camp of Ain al-Helweh as early as in the late 1980s, that is many years before Bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization came into being. Moreover, this Salafi version of Islam has not been restricted to a few individuals, but has been widely publicized among Palestinian refugees, thanks to the existence of new networks of mosques and religious institutes, which gave voice to specific grievances and to new forms of mobilization, inside and outside the Palestinian camps.

Murshid also periodically organizes gatherings in mosques with conferences and video projections that deal with various topics such as the political situation in Algeria, the Lebanese political system, the teaching of religion in Lebanese public schools, the war in Chechnya or the life of specific Islamic personalities. Among the latter, the figure of Abdallah Azzam, the original theoretician of *jihad* in Afghanistan, has been assigned special importance. He serves as a new role model for the youth of the camp. During one week, a video about his life was shown

in the al-Nur mosque. In the commentary on the event, which was written by one of the participants, certain details are stressed and convey more about the position of the writer than about the topics. Unsatisfied with his material life in a "furnished apartment in Amman," Abdallah Azzam prefers to live in a Palestinian camp next to the Jordanian capital, "in a single room built in clay," because he wants to go back to "true and real life." His eagerness for study—he obtained his Ph.D. in Islamic law in 1973—was aimed at preparing the military *jihad* whenever it was possible, for there should be no studies removed from the religious and individual obligation (*fard ain*) of *jihad*.

The Function of the Ideological Entrepreneur: The Example of Sheikh Jamal

A more classical but still effective way of expressing new values and representations in the population is from the *minbar*, the place where the sermon (*khutba*) is preached every Friday at the mosque. The sermon of Jamal Suleyman al-Khattab, the sheikh of the al-Nur mosque, provides a good example of the continuous efforts of an "ideological entrepreneur" whose aim is to break the political framework drawn by the PLO and its shaping of Palestinian identity. At age 45, Sheikh Jamal is one of the most important religious personalities in the camp. Awarded a management degree from the prestigious American University of Beirut (AUB) in the mid-1980s, he became sheikh of the al-Nur mosque at the end of the 1980s, chosen by a *majlis* organized by his former religious teachers. In addition to his religious role, he served as an employee of UNRWA. In 1993, he was dismissed from this position because of a legal conviction *in absentio* by a Lebanese court in Saida that accused him of encouraging sectarian strife in Lebanon. This affair began with the arrest of young Palestinians who had attempted to dynamite a statue of the Virgin Mary in a Maronite cemetery in Maghdushe, a Christian village overlooking Saida and Ain al-Helweh.

In his speeches, Sheikh Jamal considers himself a legitimate actor in the Lebanese cultural and political debate, and his own visions of Islam systematically oppose the values of the Lebanese National Pact. For example, the Muslim ministers who adopted the principle of civil marriage in March 1998 were demonstrating their religious unbelief because:

> They authorized what is forbidden and they forbade what is legal . . . the President is telling Muslims: "Forget what the Koran says about this!"

> Where is the religious zeal of the Muslims? In this country, they are more numerous than the Christians. If so many Muslims refuse to speak, it is an additional proof of their own submission and that they have deserted the religion they inherited. An impure man (who is impure because, as God once said, the *mushrikin*, i.e. Christians, are impure) is telling the Muslims: Desert your Koran, desert your religion, now civil law will be ruling you, and it is better for you to obey this law.[15]

In Lebanon, these rhetorical and confessional attacks awaken memories of the worst period of the civil war. Actually, from the point of view of certain religious actors, this war never ended and people in the camp must remain mobilized. In the same vein, young Muslims must not study in the Lebanese public school system because, according to the Sheikh, its programs insult God and his prophet, Muhammed. When he speaks about electoral participation in the legislative body, something that we might think would not concern him as a Palestinian living in Lebanon, Sheikh Jamal severely criticizes the Muslim clerics who invite Muslims to participate in the electoral process.

Although he cannot be held responsible for acts of violence against alcohol vendors in Saida and the surrounding area, such as the use of dynamite on the shops, Sheikh Jamal provides a certain religious legitimacy to these murderous acts. He spreads a "rhetoric of disparagement" that contributes to the "development of a direct or indirect mechanism of defense of physical violence exercised in the name of a group that seeks domination and claims to be defending its values" (Braud, 1999: 40). Naturally, this disparaging rhetoric is a reaction in many ways to the position held by the Lebanese political establishment, as well as by many segments of the Lebanese population regarding the Palestinians. Moreover, it is possible that this rhetorical approach, defended by a "micro-organization with simplistic doctrinal foundation," would not meet with such a response in the camp if the Palestinians were officially recognized instead of being physically, socially, and legally put at the margins of Lebanese society. In a context of exclusion, the rhetoric of Sheikh Jamal makes sense out of the social frustrations of the refugees. It has the triple effect of restoring self-esteem, providing a simplified explanation of the current situation, and channeling social hatred toward those who supposedly are threatening the collective identity of the group—now exclusively defined in religious terms—even though the victims of these attacks (shopkeepers in the Saida area or traffic policemen) are in no way responsible for the problems of the refugees. By modifying the terms of the Palestinian question using religious categories that were

previously foreign to it, the camp preachers contribute to the dissolution of the Palestinian cause and to the creation of militant core groups that include both Palestinians and Lebanese, this in particular because the current notion propounded by Jamal al-Khattab represents the dominant "religious offer" in Ain al-Helweh. As the Palestinian cause dissolves, the links with these new actors that seek to extend their intellectual influence are reinforced and they recruit new militants among a youth that have nothing whatsoever to lose.

The breach with Palestinian identity has not always been so brutal. Sheikh Jamal is particularly talented at manipulating the meaning of the feeling of belonging. In the presence of the faithful he would never condemn the link with the nation with the same violence that he might use in private conversation. He prefers to operate indirectly by showing that Palestinian identity hides a more fundamental reality, the sense of belonging to a given religion. If there is, for example, a problem involving the Palestinian question in Lebanon, this is essentially due to the fact that the refugee population is Muslim and that its presence represents a risk for the balance of religious communities in that country:

> If the majority of our population was Christian—fortunately, this is not the case!—there would be no problem. We could give them the nationality and the Palestinian problem would no longer exist. They bring in Armenians, they help them settle, give them a passport, a nationality, and there is no problem. The problem exists, my brothers, because we are Muslim. It is that simple. Unfortunately, there are some counted as Muslims in this country that are participating in the conspiracy along with the United Nations, the government, and all the regional players hostile to Islam and Muslims.[16]

In the summer of 1999, Sheikh Jamal decided to associate himself with the other "Islamic forces" in the camp. They created their own TV station—the "Vocation" (*al-risalat*)—in order to express their opinions to a larger segment of the camp's population by cable. In December 1999, al-Risalat showed images of the "holy war" in Chechnya where Mujahidin in the mountains were under the orders of Commandant Khattab. Al-Risalat also broadcasts news programs from al-Jazira, the well-known Qatari TV network, interrupting transmission whenever an unveiled woman appears on screen. As for their own programs, dramatic scenes of the first Intifada are shown, with children throwing stones at Israeli soldiers, interrupted by pictures of ritual stoning during the pilgrimage in Mecca, suggesting that the soldiers are the embodiment of evil, which every believer has a duty to

eradicate. These pictures are a functional part of the implementation of the Salafi groups' strategy in the Palestinian environment. Its purpose is to show the continuity of, as well as the equivalence between, the different fronts of the *jihad* and the religious nature of the Israeli–Arab conflict. There is no explanation of the historical roots of the conflict. A map of Palestine does not appear even once on the screen. History and geography are disappearing behind the immediate data of religious identity.

The sheikh empowers his audience by proposing a new interpretative framework, as well as a new definition of their social and political exclusion. In this the pariahs of Lebanese society become—by a complete reversal of perspective—an elite that is empowered to expel from the Muslim community (*umma*) all Lebanese Muslims "guilty" of participating in the political system instead of demonstrating exclusive obedience to God. As a regulator of meaning, his role consists of promoting a new interpretative framework, which is the condition precedent to new mobilizations. The identitarian entrepreneur does not limit himself to expressing grievances; his role is defined above all by "the manner in which grievances are interpreted and the generation and diffusion of those interpretations" (Snow and Rochford, 1986: 465). By providing an interpretive framework that privileges religious categories, the sheikh imposes a new optic through which social realities are viewed and he redefines the borders of the group by paving the way for new forms of action and mobilization. In the sheikh's vision, the camp is no longer a peripheral location where a Palestinian community is surviving without status in postwar Lebanon. Rather, it is a sanctuary of Islamic purity removed from a political order hostile to Islam.

The Camp as Sound Box: The Links Between Local and Global Realities

Religious entrepreneurs do not limit their ideological agenda to local issues. Opposition to the world order also serves to reinforce their concept of identity, enabling them to establish a continuum between all forms of aggression—internal and external—against the Islamic community. For many years the camp has thus been a theater for transnational mobilization that seeks to create "Islamic spaces of solidarity" wherever Muslims are threatened in the world (Badie, 1999: 174).

These mobilizations went far beyond the limits of the camps. The war in the Balkans and in the Caucasus triggered a strong transnational mobilization in the Muslim world. The war in Chechnya, daily

covered by news flashes on the al-Jazira satellite channel, became a new "war in Afghanistan" for the pious population in the Sunni Muslim neighborhoods of Tripoli, Saida, or Beirut. During this time, we witnessed the birth of an "emotional cause" fed by sermons on Friday, fund-raising in support of "fighters for Islam," and the distribution of videotapes showing Commander Khattab escaping the Caucasus mountains under fire from Russian forces and opposing ultrasophisticated weapons with the strength of his faith. A significant part of the audience was literally submerged in the time of a Salafi *jihadism*, identifying with the population of Grozny that suffered daily from bombardments by Russian troops.

Ethnic cleansing (*al-tathir al-irqi*) of Muslims in the province of Kosovo under the auspices of the Serb government in Belgrade gave rise to a support network, both officially and through private initiative, to assist the Muslim refugees, while at the same time provoking hostile analyses of NATO's actions in Islamic radical circles. In the sermons preached by Sheikh Jamal al-Khattab, all forms of violence in the late twentieth century were directed exclusively against the Muslims. He saw the West as refusing to allow Muslims a state within Europe while in Indonesia East Timor was moving toward secession with the help of the United Nations only because the population is Christian, and he viewed this secession as weakening the Muslim government. According to the sheikh, in Kosovo:

> Muslims are trapped between the hammer of NATO crusaders and the anvil of the Serbs, also crusaders. All attack the Muslims. The Serbs cut throats, murder, and rape, while NATO bombards trucks carrying refugees and kills them as well. NATO is the cause of the expulsion of Muslims remaining in the area which has a population of over 95 per cent Muslims . . . No one is rushing to save them or even to hear their cries. All this, my brothers, because zealousness no longer rules their spirits, because enthusiasm for religion has died in their hearts, and because their faith has become almost cold.[17]

The Salafi Rebellion and the Encounter with Ain al-Helweh

This was the context of the serious conflicts that occurred from December 31, 1999 to January 7, 2000 between units of the Lebanese army and militant Islamic groups in the steep-sided mountains of Sir al-Dinniye, some 50 kilometers northeast of Tripoli. These skirmishes, which lasted six days and plunged the country into a state of terror at the prospect of another civil war, resulted in over

30 deaths: 11 soldiers, including an officer, 5 civilians, and 15 fundamentalist militants. Improvised military camps had been set up in the mountains of the region supervised by former "Afghan Arabs" led by the Lebanese national Bassam al-Kanj. We believe that the militants did not intend to found an "Islamic caliphate in Lebanon" as stated in the official version of events, but rather planned to train combatants for Caucasus. In the Dinniye mountains, the inequality of the opposing forces, as well as the topography of the combat area, inevitably suggested the struggle of the *jihad* fighters in the Caucasus Mountains. These combats took place at the same time as the destruction of Grozny by Russian troops, and in the feverish minds of those following the combats at Ain al-Helweh, the fight against the Lebanese army was an extension of the *jihad* of the Chechen people against the Russian army. Significantly, young Usbat members believed in a possible incursion into the camp by the Lebanese army and were prepared for "another Grozny."[18] Thus there is a gap between this immersion in the time of the Chechen conflict and the locale framework of Islamic mobilization in Lebanon whose only rationale is to remove itself as far as possible from any kind of military presence. Dinniye is thus an area chosen by the ultramobile militants for its geographical isolation and its proximity to Tripoli, where certain quarters constitute a reserve for recruiting young militants.

This gap, this "dissociation between time and space," is typical of the globalization trend and, according to Anthony Giddens, appears to be the main characteristic of the events in Dinniye:

> In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly phantasmagoric: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the "visible form" of the locale conceals the distanced relations which determine its nature. (Giddens, 1990: 19)

In the same way, family relationships and social milieus, tradition, or religious ceremonies no longer determine the quality of the social relationship, but rather personal relationships and abstract systems. Relationships based on trust between the principle network organizers are formed outside the Lebanese scene, in exile in the United States or in the Peshawar valley in Pakistan. They are then extended to other individuals in a clandestine atmosphere created by the struggle of the Ahbash brotherhood following the assassination of Sheikh Nizar al-Halabi. Personal relationships are thus no longer based on

a family, nation, or locally, but rather on the intensity of commitment, which determines the mechanisms that allow for the building of trust. Bassam al-Kanj trusted the leaders of the Usbat because they had been condemned by the Lebanese government and because this condemnation was a guarantee of the sincerity of their commitment toward Salafi Islamism. Palestinians committed to Salafi–jihadi networks have refused to limit themselves to a context of "co-presence" organized around the celebration of Palestinian memory.[19] On the contrary, they seek to establish a "spatial and temporal distance," that is, adhering to a worldwide Islamic time and thus escaping the physical boundaries of the camp.

During his initial stay in Lebanon in 1994, Bassem al-Kanj again contacted former Afghanistan fighters, "demobilized" like himself and back in their country of origin. With the help of Ahmad al-Kassam—who was later condemned to death by a Lebanese court for his participation in the assassination of Nizar al-Halibi and executed on March 24, 1997—he met for the first time with representatives of Usbat in the Ain al-Helweh camp. He met the group's emir, Abu Mahjen, as well as his deputy, Abu Obeida, known as *jihad* Mustapha, who was the main individual responsible for the military wing of the clandestine organization.

For Usbat members, this visit was both a sign of recognition of their importance on the local Islamist scene and an opportunity to acquire information on the situation of Muslims at various fronts of the *jihad*. From the point of view of empirical sociology, both categories of actors theoretically have nothing in common. The former have been activists within the radical wing of the worldwide Islamic movements for over a decade. They went from the American continent to the Indian subcontinent, sometimes stopping in Europe or Latin America to seek funding for a "movable Jihad" of many shapes and sizes that theoretically was developed in Peshawar and applicable virtually everywhere else. As opposed to the *jihad* professionals, whose lives are ruled by constant movement, the Salafi groups in Ain al-Helweh are on the contrary static and urban actors. They are confined to a miniscule area and opposed since the middle of the 1980s to the statist organization, the PLO, that claims to represent them.

Since the early 1990s, the Salafi groups have been dedicated to a multifaceted struggle against the "enemies of Islam" in Lebanese society. In the mid-1980s, the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets provided a new ideological model for militants of Palestinian origin who were committed to the struggle against the influence of the PLO

in Ain al-Helweh. There, the real stakes were nothing less than the definition of the identity of the refugee population. The war in Afghanistan thus provided an opportunity for these new religious entrepreneurs to transpose an entire network of symbols, images, oppositions, and figures to the camp situation, which then functioned as a weapon in the war against the political achievements of the PLO among the camp population such as the development and promotion of a Palestinian identity. We saw how this encounter with an "Afghani Arab" had been prepared several years earlier by the idealized presentation of this war to a segment of the camp's younger generation who identified with the heroic figure of the Palestinian Abdallah Azzam. Aside from the question of the recognition of the role of the Usbat as a branch of the radical Islamic movement, the arrival in the camp of an individual such as Bassem al-Kanj, who had been directly involved in the war in Afghanistan, also facilitated things on a practical level through the exchange and sharing of arms, logistical resources, and volunteers.[20]

The Sacrifice of Ahmed Abu Kharrub or How the "Voice of Truth" has Drowned Out the "Voice of Palestine"

During the conflicts, the link with the Ain al-Helweh camp was dramatically illustrated by a suicide attack carried out on January 2, 2000 by Ahmed Abu Kharrub. Kharrub, a Palestinian from the Saida camp, targeted the Russian embassy in Beirut located on a busy street in the al-Mazraa Cornish. The young Palestinian, who "decided to sacrifice himself for Grozny," was killed during the assault by the national guard (the FSI), who also lost a policeman in the clash.

Ahmed Abu Kharrub's family comes from the village of Naame, located in the extreme north of Palestine in an area known as the "seven villages" that, formerly Lebanese in 1920, became Palestinian after the signing of the 1923 agreement that defined the Lebanese–Palestinian frontier between the two mandatory powers France and Great Britain. In 1994, the Lebanese government, which had since the end of the civil war claimed sovereignty over these villages, now located in Israeli territory, proposed Lebanese nationality via decree to the "Palestinian" population in the seven villages. Seizing the opportunity to benefit from a minimum of legal security in a context of increasingly stringent legislation governing the status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the Kharrub family immediately provided proof of their geographical origins in order to obtain recognition of their Lebanese nationality (their family papers indicated

a classification as *nufus* of Marjayun in Lebanon). The hazards of modern Middle Eastern history and the arbitrary nature of the borders established have resulted in absurd reclassifications within the Abu Kharrub family. Thus the father, now deceased, became Lebanese in the middle of the 1990s, as did two of his sons, while their respective wives, who were not covered by the provisions of the decree, remained Palestinian in the eyes of Lebanese law. For religious reasons, Ahmad, the youngest boy in the family, did not want to file an application for nationality, refusing a link, even a purely formal one, with a government whose legitimacy he refused to recognize. Ahmad did so, even at the risk of compromising the future of his children, who, inasmuch as they keep their father's nationality, do not have access to the same rights as their cousins.

The family's history in Lebanon is also most informative. After 1948, the family sought refuge in the Nabatie camp in southern Lebanon. The total destruction of the camp by the Israeli airforce in 1974 forced the father to move to the Christian Mountains, where he settled in the village Bikfaya, the "cradle" of the Maronite Gemayel family. This move was also natural given the fact that since the 1960s the father had worked as a nurse in the village hospital of Bikfaya managed by nuns. At the beginning of the war in 1975, the mayor (*mukhtar*) in Bikfaya recommended that the family should leave the area—they were the only Palestinians living in Bikfaya. In spite of the many friendships they had formed over 18 years, the official informed him that he would be unable to guarantee protection for the family in a context where collective reprisals against civilians were becoming common given a climate of hatred on both sides. The family should therefore return to Nabatie. Salam, the eldest brother of Ahmed, born in 1959, underwent technical training and became a radio operator for the PLO's "Voice of Palestine" (*sawt filastin*) in 1980. Since this time, his actions in the service of the Palestinian cause have been limited to his duties as sound engineer controlling the broadcast of the Voice of Palestine programs. Four times—in 1982 in Beirut, and then in 1986, 1987, and 1990 in Saida—he barely escaped Israeli bombardments seeking to destroy the technical facilities of the Palestinian radio. At the end of the Lebanese war, Salam, who had become blind, moved to the edge of the Ain al-Helweh camp in the Lebanese–Palestinian neighborhood of Taamir prior to moving in 1996 to the slum of Sakkat. He lived in a modest one-storey house with whitewashed walls and a corrugated iron roof, while his brother Ahmed occupied the house next door.

Born in 1968, Ahmed was younger than Salam and did not live through the beginnings of the "Palestinian revolution" in Lebanon. Although still a schoolboy during the camp wars, he was arrested for several days by the Shiite Amal militia tracking down Palestinians in the Nabatie area. In 1989, Ahmed decided to join a small Islamic militia led by Sheikh Maher Hammud in Saida, which was dissolved at the return of the Lebanese army to the region in 1991.[21] Thanks to an electrician's diploma, Ahmed Abu Kharrub worked for Sheikh Hammud's radio station "The Voice of the Truth" (*sawt al-haqq*) while following courses in religion in several mosques in the town. Another irony of their different itineraries, Salam and Ahmed both had a similar technical education prior to using their skills in the service of diametrically opposed causes, the second brother like a copy of the first, but with a divergent approach to Islam. Their differences can in no way be explained in terms of education level, profession, or religious practices—Salam is also very pious, but refuses to interpret the social world exclusively in religious terms. This difference may be explained by the effects of the socialization process, taking into account the divergent influences to which they were exposed. Salam became politicized in the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, at a time when the PLO reigned uncontested over all the refugees, and, in a more general way, over the Muslim society in Lebanon both inside and outside the camps. He was involved in the various controversies that raged within the PLO during the various stages of his Lebanese travels. His political apprenticeship was served in the context of his job, which involved broadcasting the political vision of the PLO in Lebanon and throughout the region. In some sense his professional tools were the primary vectors of socialization. While familiar with the nationalistic Palestinian rhetoric broadcast by the Sawt Filastin station, he learned early to distinguish between the different levels of political action by the PLO while justifying his local initiatives in terms of strategy and political survival. Thus in 1989, faced with the questions raised in the Palestinian camps during the conflicts between the Fatah and the Hizballah in the Iqlim al-Tuffah region, he explains "the danger of Iranian politics in the region" and the need to exploit the divisions on the Shiite front to maintain an independent Palestinian presence in southern Lebanon. His business trips to foreign countries—Tunisia and Yugoslavia—broadened his vision of the world, while his brother was never able to leave Lebanon or even live for several months in another part of the country. Ten years later when his brother Ahmed reached

adulthood, the PLO was weakened by its defeat by the Israeli army in 1982 and could no longer ensure the political socialization of young Palestinians even in the camps, its natural bases. At the same time, the resistance to Israel in the south became the prerogative of the Hizballah. In the early phases of this development, Hizballah readopted the slogans from the 1970s but with a religious dimension, while the Palestinian leaders were engaged in a "realistic diplomacy." This resulted in the implicit recognition of the Israeli state at the PLO's 1988 Council in Algiers, thus bringing an end to the utopian vision of a return to the Palestine of 1948 by armed struggle.

This generation effect, which accounts to a certain degree for the success of the Salafi trend in the camp, must be combined with the geographical factor.[22] Ahmed was not exposed to the same influences and lived in a much narrower socialization space than his brother. He was integrated very early into Saida's Islamic society, with its support networks, its politicized sheikhs, and its own perspective about the regional situation. For a Palestinian refugee, distancing from the PLO was the path to better integration into the local Islamic society, thanks to the protection provided by the religious figures that had played a strong role during the camp wars. Later, Ahmed became fascinated by far-off conflicts—Afghanistan and the Balkans—and his discussions with his brother Salam became more and more strained. Salam had traveled to Yugoslavia prior to the civil war for professional reasons and believed that, as opposed to the essentialist rhetoric common in most Lebanese mosques, "there were no significant differences between Muslims and the rest of the country's population." Moreover, Salam does not believe that Muslims in Lebanon are "persecuted," contrary to the clichés common to fundamentalist Islamic rhetoric in the camp and among radical Lebanese circles. His direct, empirical knowledge of the other (Christians in Bikfaya before the beginning of the war, Bosnian Muslims in ex-Yugoslavia) contradicted the abstract and ideological knowledge mediated by the various figures serving as role models in Saida and the surrounding area who were largely responsible for molding Ahmed's religious culture.[23]

The fate of the Kharrub family is in itself an excellent example of the volatile nature of individual identity and the fragmentation of allegiances in many different directions in spite of a family context that was initially unified. Salam was a member of the PLO, Ahmed chose the radical Islamic movement and the supreme sacrifice of his life, while a third brother is a soldier in the Lebanese army.

The Seeds of Civil War

The ideology of civil war preached by the religious figures in the camp has also transformed the identity of the enemy. In addition to the "hate-filled communities" (Shiites or Maronites) or other Arab governments who persecute "true believers," the enemy now also wears the face of supporters of Yasir Arafat and members of the Fatah. The struggle with the Fatah is primarily of symbolic significance. Thus, for the brother of Abu Mahjen, Abu Tariq,

> [The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate] in 1924 is a more important date than 1948. At that time the destruction of the Islamic Empire put an end to over 1300 years of Islamic rule. . . . The war for Islam is a world war that is happening everywhere, here, in Chechnya, in Kosovo.[24]

Here we see the same themes as those developed over a 15-year period by Sheikh Khattab. This type of claim is a declaration of war addressed to a political culture built around the memory of the 1948 catastrophe (*nakba*), of the litany of "martyrs" over the last 50 years, and a celebration of the highlights in the history of the Palestinian people, both in Lebanon and Palestine. As has been said by Paul Ricoeur:

> [Through commemorative festivals] any community can relive in a sense the events they believe to be the source of their own identity—a symbolic structure of social memory. We do not know if any societies exist that do not have a relation to inaugural events that, in the aftermath, are seen as the origin of the community itself. (Ricoeur, 1986: 424)

The symbolic coup de force of the Salafis was to have successfully reclassified the constitutive elements of identity by relegating the trauma of the Palestinian exodus in 1948 to the status of a secondary event compared to the initial breach: the abolition of the Islamic caliphate by Mustafa Kemal in 1924. Retrospectively, this decision is considered to be the principle cause of the political decline of the Muslim people, from the Balkans to the Middle East.

The camp's urban organization—which is in reality similar to a Palestinian slum—demonstrates that the domination of physical space is also a power issue for both the Salafi movement and the nationalists. In the midst of a crowded network of alleyways (*zawarib*), the camp is crossed by two main streets (the "upper street" and the "lower street"), which are also the only roads that link the northern entrance, less than 2 kilometers from the center of Saida, to the southern entrance on the road to Darb as-Sim near the Christian

village on the heights of Maghduche. In this area the Usbat group controls two mosques while the Fighting Islamic movement, which shares the same ideological positions, controls two other mosques, each occupying a central position on the two main roads near the vegetable market.

In contrast to this religious control of space, the military posts of the Fatah control only the northern and southern entrances at the two borders of the camp, abandoning to the other forces a presence at the heart of the camp's daily activities. The occupation of space also has a vertical dimension. Inasmuch as the height of the religious buildings is designed to indicate to the population a hierarchy of values, it is understandable that, in addition to construction work to enlarge the buildings, the mosques and their minarets are often elevated as well. Several examples illustrate the strategy of stone at the service of Islam. After having added an additional floor in 1998, the al-Nur mosque enlarged the prayer hall the following year. "Islamic engineers" did not hesitate to use a giant crane to facilitate the job. Since the summer of 1999, the renovation of the mosque of Sheikh Hisham involved linking the upper floor to the building across the way, creating a passageway covered with an arch above the upper street that both cars and pedestrians pass under daily.

The construction work was officially financed by a mosque committee composed of representatives from all the mosques in the camp. This committee contributes to a strengthening of mutual support between the Islamic forces, from supporters of the Salafi movement to the Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood. This architectural innovation also has a strong symbolic meaning given the context of its construction—reestablishment of military control of the camp by the Fatah in June 1999 at a time when conflict appeared imminent between Yasir Arafat's organization and Islamic fundamentalists. The latter being in a position of relative inferiority on a military level, Islamist militants positioned their actions in a long-term vision of spiritual conquest and occupation of space by increasing as much as possible the physical size of the mosques they control and by establishing a grid of mosques and prayer rooms throughout the camp. The whole system is organized by preachers determinedly hostile to any alternative religious expression. Now re-Islamized, the camp's physical reality has changed. Its extraterritoriality is now less the result of a lack of solution to the problem of refugees on a regional and international level than a commitment by the religious figures to escape control by the Lebanese government and its sacrilegious institutions. This exceptional situation becomes an advantage and the camp is transformed

into a peripheral urban area similar to the suburbs of large Arab cities, but where entry is forbidden to the legal authorities.

Violence in the camps is not only symbolic, however, as evidenced by the revenge killings that have become more and more frequent in the last decade between Salafi militants and the partisans of Yasir Arafat. Following the assassination in May 2001 of Sheikh Shukri Sabri, a close supporter of Arafat, a Fatah representative anonymously accused militants from Usbat:

> Only they are capable of such acts and committing murder within the camp. He was assassinated around midnight in front of his house in the Raas al-Ahmar quarter by the Usbat. They kill in the camp and do nothing against the Israelis. They never organize any operations in Palestine. They weep for the "Muslim people" in Chechnya, but not the dead from Force Seventeen.[25]

A camp inhabitant said, lowering his voice, that:

> The Usbat have not contributed anything to the population since they first arrived. What are they offering to people? Only death! They have lost their influence after their armed operations. It is the people that has to suffer the consequences of their actions.

Those who are not comfortable with the religious discourses and practices in the camp—and they are numerous—prefer to pray outside, in one of the rare nonpoliticized mosques of Saida. These religious practices testify to the individualization of belief and a process of diversification in the types of religious belonging and expression. The control of the sermons by certain groups has given rise among many refugees to another vision of the relationship between religion and politics, with a refusal to be drawn into conflicts that no longer concern the successful establishment of a Palestinian state, or at least only from a considerable distance.

In a country that lies under the weight of the Syrian *imperium*, Yasir Arafat's supporters have been constantly accused, since the Oslo agreement, of being new Israeli auxiliaries in the region, even if the accusation has diminished since the triggering of the second Intifada in September 2000. The leader of the Hizballah, Hassan Nasrallah, even called for the assassination of Yasir Arafat following the Wye Plantation agreements in September 1998. Finding themselves on the defensive, supporters of the Palestinian Authority's policy immediately denounced "those who find an opportunity to

express their complacency and sycophancy in favor of certain regional parties with whom they are cooperating."[26]

Evidence of the degree of dissension within Palestinian society in Lebanon has been provided by the manifest eagerness of the various actors to build alliances with outside parties to gain an advantage over the enemy within. For the Salafi networks, whose many leaders have been sentenced with the death penalty by the Lebanese justice system, this strategy has become essentially a means of survival. Denunciation of the peace process and the use of hate-filled rhetoric against the Palestinian Authority are ways for these groups to obtain a life insurance policy with respect to the Syrian power. By fostering a situation of permanent mobilization against Yasir Arafat, these local leaders are able to negotiate what is in effect safe conduct, albeit temporary and fragile, with the Syrian military intelligence services in Lebanon. Their political approach is derived from a process that has become commonplace on the Lebanese political scene, a process known as *istiqwaa*, which, for an actor in a vulnerable situation—and there is no one in Lebanon, not even the Hizballah, who is not in a vulnerable situation—provides a way to forestall the desires of the hegemonic power to preserve and strengthen their position on the local political scene.

On a micro-political level, it is a form of political conduct common to Middle Eastern societies, where each party is eager to create alliances with foreigners to better overcome their immediate neighbor, or even brother. In the spring of 1999, at a moment when tension was at its highest point between the Usbat and Fatah in the camp, the Islamic leaders attempted to persuade Lebanese and Syrian authorities to rescind the sentences against certain Salafi personalities in exchange for an escalation in the struggle against the camp supporters of Yasir Arafat. When speaking, the most vehement preachers avoided any criticism of the Syrian regime, and the abstract denunciation of the "Arab regimes" referred primarily to regimes that had signed a peace treaty with Israel, such as Egypt and Jordan.

Although they verbally and physically attack the symbols and representatives of the Lebanese state, Salafi militants never attack the symbols of the Baathist regime in Damascus and carefully avoid any aggressive action against the Syrian stations and roadblocks that are common in the Saida area. The Usbat are taking advantage of the political opportunity provided by the historical conflict of legitimacy between Syria and the PLO, which was aggravated by the signature of the Oslo agreements in 1993. The Usbat thus have a function in the regional system, that of acting against the Fatah networks and limiting the extension of the Palestinian Authority in the southern

refugee camps. They are also fulfilling another purpose in the national system, by creating an amalgam between sectarianism and the Palestinian camps, an amalgam very useful to all those who denounce the so-called time bomb of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

For the Salafi networks, the exacerbation of internal conflicts has thus become the only guarantee of survival. Those new conditions inside Ain al-Helweh might very well provoke an inter-Palestinian civil war should a severe crisis ensue. This is something very new among the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In their Lebanese history, the Palestinians' leadership has been divided more than once. In the face of those divisions, very often fueled by the outside, the population always sided with Yasir Arafat, the symbol of Palestinian independence.[27] This is not true any longer. For the first time, there will be no more Palestinian solidarity among the refugee population, because certain segments of this population no longer belong to the national Palestinian universe. Fatah leaders have declared that they are ready to cooperate with the Lebanese army to deliver to the authorities those responsible for sectarian violence, exchanging political recognition for their contribution to Lebanese security.[28]

By appointing themselves as the standard bearers of the Sunni cause in Lebanon, by investing in conflicts that are removed intellectually and geographically from Palestine, the Salafi–jihadi militants in the camp have succeeded in undermining the foundations of Palestinian national sentiment from within. By destroying the contours of this national identity, religious violence has reversed the symbolic results of the armed struggle embodied by the PLO after 1967 whose objectives were just the opposite: an affirmation, often with minimal means, of the existence of a people organically connected to historical Palestine. This new self-affirmation has not only transformed the face of the enemy. It has also transposed the enemy into the camp to take the face of a neighbor or a brother. The religious groups are acting as if they have absorbed the many Palestinian defeats in Lebanon to create for themselves, behind the grandiloquent rhetoric on the imminent establishment of the Islamic caliphate, enemies that are less formidable than those of the past. Ultimately, thanks to certain refugees and 50 years after the exodus of their grandparents to Lebanon, the dream pursued by certain figures in the Israeli political and military establishment—the negation of Palestinian identity and the displacement of the conflict toward other issues and other actors—has become, at least on a micro-political level, reality.

Notes

1. Jihadi or Salafi Islamism represents a militant Islamist ideology that relates itself to the *salafiyya* brand of Islamic Modernism. This ideology originated in the late nineteenth century in Egypt and aimed at Islamic reform by returning to the pious elders of early Islam. In its militant form, Salafi Islamism accuses Muslim political regimes of betraying Islam for collaborating with the West. In particular since their engagement in the Afghanistan war, these militants consider *jihad* as a personal obligation for each believer, they normally refuse to take part in national politics and strive for the establishment of an "Islamic emirate." They call for militant action against the West, as well as against its Muslim allies, as the only means of achieving radical political change by the establishment of an "Islamic emirate."
2. He was one of the speakers during a meeting in Beirut that was meant to be a carbon copy of the counter-conference in Teheran, denouncing the peace process inaugurated by the Madrid conference in October 1991. From the weekly magazine *al-Bilad*, November 2, 1991.
3. See the account of the funeral published in the Lebanese daily *al-Nahar*, December 18, 1991.
4. *Al-Hidayat*, July 8, 1990. From October 1989 to November 1991, young Palestinians from *Murshid* published an Islamic review—called *al-Hidayat*—whose articles mirror their conception of Islam. Significantly enough, the authors define themselves as part of a "League of Muslim Students" (*itihad al-talabat al-muslimin*), without making any mention of their Palestinian origin.
5. On the Ahbash, please refer to the hagiographic article by Hamzeh and Dekmejian (1996).
6. These comments are from a radio show entitled "The Free Tribune," recorded live on March 23, 1997 by the *idhaat al-fajr* radio station broadcasting from Saida.
7. The camp was thus the scene of new violence. A Habashi Palestinian sheikh was assassinated in Saida (*al-Nahar*, August 26, 1994); two bombs were placed in front of shops owned by members of the brotherhood (*al-Hayat*, December 3, 1994).
8. Sermon by Sheikh Yussef Tohaibish, Hisham Shraidi Mosque, Ain al-Helweh, Friday, April 6, 2001. Insisting on the necessity to act against the enemies of Islam, the preacher never mentioned the Israeli enemy, although the second Intifada had been declared six months previously.
9. Michel Wievorka (1998). The author continues: "the crisis of modernity is extremely favorable to this type of violence, where the signs of identity, dissociated from any connection with a relational space of the political type, are increasingly expressed in an extremist fashion the more the individual is driven by the frustrations created by this very modernity."

10. Sheikh Yussef, op cit.
11. Interview with Sheikh Ghunaim, February 3, 2001, Nahr al-Barid.
12. *Al-Hidayat*, January 2, 1990.
13. *Al-Hidayat*, April 6, 1990.
14. *Al-Hidayat*, November 22, 1991.
15. Speech given in the al-Nur Mosque, March 22, 1998, Ain al-Helweh.
16. Speech given in the al-Nur Mosque, May 11, 1998. Ain al-Helweh.
17. Speech given in 1998, Ain al-Helweh.
18. Confessionalism also fostered this interpretation of events, as shown by the commentaries that emphasize the community origin of the army soldiers sent to Dinniye, all from among the "hate-filled *asabiyyat*," to borrow the expression of one of the camp sheikhs. "There were mainly Christians and Shiites," according to the radical communities of Ain al-Helweh, when explaining the soldiers' determination.
19. The terms "co-présence" and "distanciation spatio-temporelle" are taken from chapter three of Giddens (1987).
20. In such a small country as Lebanon, it was almost impossible to avoid a conjunction of militants such as Bassem al-Kanj and the Usbat, even if the latter were still little known outside the limited circles of the Salafi branch of Lebanese Islamic movements. During these meetings, the Usbat requested sheikhs to train the young people living in Ain al-Helweh. The resocialization process implemented by the religious figures is an essential factor in understanding how, on a practical level, the symbolic breach with the Palestinian national identity was accomplished. The Ain al-Helweh activists' call for sheikhs recognized as competent by the religious community also corresponds to a phenomenon already encountered in Algeria during the 1990s within the GIA, where militants with a low level of religious culture requested *ulama* capable of instilling, thanks to their in-depth knowledge of the traditional corpus of religious law, the meaning of Islam in line with the concrete realities of the struggle. Thus, we can find collections of texts by Abu Qatada, a Palestinian sheikh living in London, in Ain al-Helweh that were used as a form of religious expertise by the GIA in Algeria.
21. Thanks to support from Iran, Maher Hammoud wanted to play in Saida a role similar to that of Sheikh Shaaban in Tripoli. They share Iranian connections and a similar interpretation of Islam.
22. According to the FAFO (The Norwegian Organization of Applied Social Science) survey about Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the young people have the most rigid attitude about the role of women in public life. Among young men under age 30, barely 20 percent accept women in responsible positions in public life, while this figure is over 40 percent among the adult males above 40. This percentage may be seen as an indicator of the inroads made by the Salafist ideology among the younger generation. At Ain al-Helweh, some mosque preachers are also full-time teachers in UNRWA schools, where they

can additionally exert their influence in classes in which mixing the sexes is forbidden for adolescents. Refer to the results of the statistical survey of the FAFO (in *Living Conditions of Palestinians Refugees in camps and gatherings in Lebanon*, February 2000).

23. The distinction between "direct knowledge" and "ideological knowledge" was made by Elizabeth Picard in an article comparing the action of the two militia members in their respective communities in Lebanon (the Christian militia of the Lebanese Forces) and in Northern Ireland (the Protestant militia of the Ulster Defense Association). "From now on, the population in the region dominated by the LF and the population living in quarters held by the UDA replace the direct knowledge they had of other populations in the country (Muslims, Catholics) with an ideological knowledge, impossible to verify empirically, and instilled through a socialization process controlled by the militia." See Picard (1994: 153).
24. Interview with Abu Tareq, op cit.
25. Interview with a Fatah representative, Rashidiye, July 2001.
26. See *al-Quds*, the Fatah newspaper in Lebanon, 39 (1998): 11.
27. In 1983, during the revolt of Fatah dissidents in Tripoli or during the camp war in Beirut (1985–1987).
28. The Fatah newspaper in Lebanon, published in the Arafatist camp of Rashidiye, mentions, for example, that both PLO and Fatah condemned violations of security: "the Fatah even offered its resources to the government and the legal system to close the door to those who seek to hunt in troubled waters." See, *al-Quds*, 39 (1998). One of the objectives of the death sentence pronounced in December 1999 on Yasir Arafat's representative in Lebanon, Sultan Abu al-Ainan, by the Judicial Council was to put an end to cooperation between certain officers in the Lebanese army and members of the Fatah. This legal decision was welcomed with a sigh of relief by the Islamic movements, because it eliminated the possibility of coordinated action to their detriment. By condemning the representative of the Palestinian Authority in Lebanon, the decision of the Judicial Council established a similarity between the Usbat and the Fatah: it was the same judicial instance that, some years ago, also pronounced the death sentence on Abdal Karim al-Saadi, alias Abu Mahjen. The political enemy became a criminal, a guilty individual with whom no relationship was authorized.

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Chapter 7



Resolving the Palestinian Refugee Problem: Edward A. Norman's Unintended Contribution to Relevant Lessons in Perspectives, Values, and Consequences

Dan Tschirgi

Introduction

As the world turned its attention to the U.S.-led "War on Terrorism" after September 11, 2001, the agenda of international politics underwent a clear revision. In no case was this more evident than in that of the so-called Middle East peace process. Although already severely damaged, and perhaps moribund, when the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington occurred, the "peace process" was rather roughly shoved to Washington's back burner, something that became all too clear when the "Middle East Quartet," in the fall of 2002, in effect decreed that movement toward a final resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict might commence in 2005.

The "Quartet's" expressed hope notwithstanding, there are obviously no guarantees at this juncture (Winter, 2002) regarding either the timing or modalities of a renewed search for a peaceful end to the

Palestine problem. Too much remains unclear as to what may befall the Arab World in the near future. The prospect of war between Iraq and a U.S.-led international coalition looms, and no one can say with any certainty what either the immediate or more long-term consequences of such a conflict might be.

There is, however, one factor that is unlikely to change when, or if, efforts to promote definitive peace between Palestinians and Israelis resume. That is the difficult issue of resolving the Palestinian refugee problem. The refugees constituted what was perhaps the major stumbling block to the post–Oslo peace process and their existence will certainly threaten to derail any post–September 11 peacemaking efforts. The following pages highlight major dimensions of today's Palestinian refugee problem as well as some of the key normative and substantive considerations that will inevitably figure in efforts to resolve it peacefully. By way of doing this, much of the discussion that follows revolves around the personality and activities of a man who never became widely known to students of the Middle East but whose experience carries multiple lessons for all who are interested in the area.

Edward A. Norman was a wealthy businessman. He was also an American Jew, who was not a Zionist and who at some point in the early 1930s concluded that in politics, as in physics, two distinct bodies cannot simultaneously occupy the same space. Moved by humanitarian considerations, Norman devised and promoted a plan to end Arab–Jewish tensions in Palestine on terms that he felt would benefit both parties. Norman's wealth, background, and personality, allowed him to pursue his campaign energetically (but very quietly) on three continents throughout the last half of the 1930s. They also allowed him to involve the highest levels of the U.S. and British governments in his effort. The outbreak of the Second World War ended Norman's initiative but not, perhaps, its usefulness. Norman's story is instructive for all who are concerned with the dynamics and outcome of the Middle East peace process.

Dimensions of the Refugee Problem

Estimates of the total number of Palestinian refugees vary, largely because of different views of what identifies such refugees as well as the fact that many of those forced from Palestine and/or their descendants are widely dispersed throughout the world and therefore difficult to tally. By 1949, the United Nations Conciliation Commission gave a figure of 726,000; a year later the United Nations

Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA, the international body established following the first Arab–Israeli war to provide temporary support to Palestinian refugees) had registered over 900,000 individuals.[1] In the decades that followed, natural population growth and additional waves of refugees generated by the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, the 1970–1971 civil war in Jordan, Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and the 1991 Gulf War caused UNWRA's rosters to swell dramatically. By late 1998, the agency reported 3.53 million Palestinians as registered refugees.[2] As UNWRA records do not include all Palestinian refugees, estimates of the actual current size of the population range up to 4.5–6.5 million (Zureik, 1996). There is general agreement that Palestinians form the largest single body of refugees in the world.

Although significant numbers of Palestinian refugees and their descendants are scattered over the globe, the bulk of the refugees have remained in the Arab World. By the mid-1990s, Jordan, the only Arab state to have granted citizenship en masse to displaced Palestinians after 1948, counted some 1.2 million refugees—more than 20 percent of whom still lived in camps. Some 700,000 refugees, over 55 percent in camps, were in Gaza, while the West Bank counted half a million (with over 25 percent still in camps). Syria hosted approxmately 350,000 refugees, over one-third of whom remained housed in camps. Lebanon, with a total estimated population of some 3.5 million, contains some 350,000 Palestinian refugees, over 50 percent of whom live in camps.[3]

The magnitude of the Palestinian refugee problem is obviously the single most bedeviling factor in the search for a solution. The indications are that between 2.5 and 3.5 refugees currently exist outside the area that comprises Israel/Palestine. Quite apart from all other considerations, this alone seems to ensure that a solution cannot be found in simple repatriation to former homes in Israel/Palestine.

However, there are indeed "other," and very significant, considerations. Foremost is Israel's consistent and adamant rejection of the possibility that any significant numbers of Palestinians be resettled within its borders. This renders even more unrealistic the prospects that a future Palestinian state, which if embracing the entire West Bank and Gaza, would comprise no more than 6,200 square kilometers and have a population of some two million, could assume responsibility for welcoming the refugees "home."

Repatriation, therefore, cannot be seriously considered as the sole, or even the primary, avenue to resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue. Although the PLO/PNA leadership continues to insist on the

refugees' "right of return," and offers persuasive legal arguments based on UN resolutions, the realities in which actions must be taken dictate that this is not to be.

Permanent resettlement, either in the locale of refuge or a third country, is the remaining option. Neither can be advanced without immediately running into a host of serious difficulties. Chances of resettlement in countries where the refugees currently exist are dimmed by the stormy post-1948 history of Palestinian relations with other Arabs. Egypt, with its burgeoning population and limited resources, very quickly erected—and still maintains—barriers against any significant influx of Palestinians. The Gulf States, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians once found shelter, remain influenced by the resentment that led to the massive expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait following the 1991 Gulf War. Syria, which so limited its role as host to Palestinian refugees after 1948 that today they constitute only about 2 percent of the country's population, remains committed to repatriation as the only acceptable solution. Lebanon, scarred by its recent civil war and bitter over the PLO's role in the affair, flatly insists that any solution to the refugee problem must entail the removal of Palestinians, who form over 10 percent of its current population.[4] Jordan, where Palestinian refugees amount to over 30 percent of the population, argues that it has done more than its share and will not receive more refugees.[5]

The option of resettling the refugees in "third countries" is also problematical. In all probability, massive numbers of Palestinian refugees reared in the limited environments of camps would not meet minimal requirements demanded by immigration laws in countries that might theoretically be most able to receive them. Then too, it is not clear how third countries will be willing to facilitate the immigration of large numbers of Palestinian refugees. This problem will likely be found to have become even more serious in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States. Finally, of course, it remains unknown to what extent Palestinian refugees would opt for resettlement in non-Arab, non-Islamic environments.

Working Toward a Solution

It is worth recalling that the current Middle East peace process, although informed by the trajectory of events that began with the Egyptian–Israeli peace process that followed the Arab–Israeli War of 1973, was actually born at Madrid in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. The Madrid Conference not only laid grounds for the 1994

mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO and the ensuing establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza but also established a two-level framework for the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. Bilateral negotiations between Israel and its Arab enemies would proceed on one track; multilateral talks on a variety of seminal issues, involving a wide range of international actors, formed the second level. Among the topics addressed in the latter realm was the Palestinian refugee issue. The Refugee Working Group (RWG), headed by Canada as the "Gavel," held its first full meeting in Ottawa in May 1992. The RWG opted for a topical approach, assigning members of the group ("shepherds") responsibility for guiding efforts related to specific topics: family reunification (France), databases (Norway), human resources development, job creation and vocational training (the United States), economic and social infrastructure (the European Union), child welfare (Sweden), and public health (Italy) (Brynen and Tansley, 1995).

Not surprisingly much of the RWG's activities have, as Rex Brynen and Jill Tansley point out, been devoted to "defining the problem." In this sense, its labors have helped further a greater understanding of the problem as well as of the economic and social conditions of the refugee population. Moreover, through its sponsorship of studies and a limited range of practical programs, the RWG has bent its efforts toward mobilizing resources for meeting a range of pressing refugee needs (Brynen and Tansley, 1995).

On the other hand, what the RWG has *not* achieved is at least as notable as the accomplishments just mentioned. The group's biggest, and most obvious "nonachievement" is, of course, its lack of concrete progress in devising clear policy options for a final disposition of the Palestinian refugee community. However, this cannot be attributed to the RWG but rather to the context in which it has had to function. With the core political issues of the refugee problem having been placed in abeyance by the principle actors in the peace process, the RWG had no grounds upon which to suggest, much less to work for, structural features of a resolution. As Brynen and Tansley have correctly argued: "the Refugee Working Group cannot, by its very nature, be in advance of the Middle East Peace process" (Brynen and Tansley, 1995; see also Rex Brynen, 1997).

If the RWG would be ill served by faulting it for not producing operational schemes to resolve the refugee problem, it is probably equally unfair to limit the list of its "achievements" to those cited above. It is quite possible that the RWG's major accomplishment will prove to have been far less tangible, but ultimately far more important,

than the studies, projects, and resource mobilization for which it can already take credit. Each of those activities, along with the simple endurance of the RWG's effort, may even now be seen to have furthered the "internationalization" of responsibility for producing a final resolution. In short, by working so long on behalf of the RWG's limited tactical goals, its members—along with other international actors who have so far supported the RWG activities—appear to have incurred some onus for helping in substantial ways to resolve the refugee problem if a political agreement between the key protagonists is reached.

The two other international arenas that in theory should be important venues for dealing with the refugee issue can lay no claim to being as productive as the RWG. The first, an offshoot of the 1978 Camp David Accords, is known as the Quadripartite Talks. This forum, composed of the Israel, Palestinian representatives, Egypt and Jordan, is supposed to focus on issues related to Palestinians displaced by the 1967 War. It has achieved very little. Finally, there is the forum of bilateral negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Neither side, so far as is publicly known, has modified its posture on the refugee issue, and it is here that the problem has most decisively been shelved.

The student of contemporary Middle East politics is therefore left with an apparently stark scenario. More than a decade after the post-Madrid phase of the peace process came into being, it appears that the only substantive change in the substantive nature of the Palestinian refugee problem has been an increase in the numbers of refugees. But is this really so?

Anyone familiar with the typical treatment accorded to the Palestinian refugee problem in popular (and most academic) Western discourse 20 years ago must agree that change has occurred. Two major changes are glaringly evident: first, the notion that the refugees constituted a "humanitarian" issue has been replaced by frank acceptance of the problem's key political dimension; second, the idea that the Palestinian refugee problem was a purely regional issue that should be solved by Arabs and Israelis has been fundamentally transformed—the issue is now generally accepted as one that must be addressed by the international community.

None of this is terribly surprising. Once the political legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism was accepted by the United States at Madrid and subsequently accepted by Israel, the primordial issue of Palestinians displaced as a direct or indirect result of the Jewish state's creation could no longer be labeled an apolitical humanitarian problem. It

followed, given both the demographic and political realities that developed during the decades since Israel's birth as well as the threat to world peace posed by the Arab–Israeli conflict, that the international community would not only begin to recognize a vital stake in the peace process but also the need for shared efforts to further it. It is in this sense that the RWG's most valuable role over the last decade may ultimately be seen as educational.

Because the chief political actors in the peace process—Israelis, Palestinians, and the United States—have not yet directly confronted the refugee issue, one looks in vain at these sources for operational proposals for dealing with the problem in the context of a final settlement. However, on the peripheries of officialdom, in the think tanks, in occasional journalistic commentaries, and in news articles, one may glimpse something of the trends of current practical thinking about concrete approaches to the refugee problem.

Two of the clearest examples in this regard are the 1996 book by Donna Arzt, a professor of law at Syracuse University, and a concept paper produced in 1998 by an Israeli–Palestinian team under the auspices of Harvard's Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

It is significant that two highly influential U.S. think tanks, each having close ties to U.S. policy-making circles, were associated with Arzt's work. It was published by the New York–based Council on Foreign Relations and distributed by the Washington's Brookings Institution. Arzt directed the Council on Foreign Relations' project on "The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Demographic and Humanitarian Issues." The book, *From Refugees to Citizens: Palestinians and the End of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*,[6] advances for discussion "the basic components of a plan for permanent regional absorption of Palestinian refugees that is intended to result in a mutually agreeable division of responsibilities among all of parties to the peace process." Although the author argues that "because the conflict is regional, the solution must be regional," she actually proposes a decidedly and heavily international approach to the refugee problem. The heart of Arzt's suggested solution is "an adjustment in the demographic distribution of Palestinian refugees. . . . "[7]

In short, she argues that it is necessary to "get real"[8] when considering the refugee issue, by which she means that neither the Palestinians' flat insistence on a "right of return" nor Israel's flat rejection of permitting any refugee resettlement within its borders are viable elements of a final settlement. Along the way, she also sketches various structural mechanisms for implementing the plan.

Three of the four building-blocks of Artz's scheme are the traditional approaches to resolving refugee's status: repatriation, resettlement in locales of refuge, resettlement in third countries. The fourth is compensation, either through monetary or property transfers, in a mix that is both individually and communally directed. She attempts to integrate these into a single comprehensive strategy for eliminating the Palestinian refugee problem within a period of 7–10 years after the conclusion of a final peace agreement between Israel and the PLO/Palestinian Authority.

Apart from its recommendations for demographic redistribution of refugees, the most significant regional feature of Artz's proposal is its insistence that repatriated as well as resettled refugees be granted full citizenship by their countries of permanent residence—and that they also enjoy the right to acquire the passport of any Palestinian state that may be created in the future. In a region where only Jordan has shown a willingness to grant citizenship to Palestinians, and where Israelis have been loath to consider any substantial return of Palestinians, this is a bold suggestion.

Working within her postulated 7–10-year timetable for resolving all aspects of the refugee issue, Arzt projects a total (refugee and non-refugee) Palestinian population of some 8.2 million by the year 2005. Her suggestions for demographic "adjustment" include the following: a doubling of the population of the West Bank (from 1.2 to 2.4 million); a reduction of Gaza's population (from nearly 900,000 to only 450,000); a slight increase in Jordan's Palestinian population (from 1.8 to 2.0 million); a serious reduction of Lebanon's Palestinian population (from 372,000 to 75,000); a slight increase in Syria's Palestinian community (from 350,000 to 400,000); a minimal increase in Israel's Palestinian population of only 75,000 over current projections of natural growth; a doubling (from 446,000 to 965,000) of the Palestinian populations of "the sparsely populated Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait";[9] and, finally, a doubling of the Palestinian populations of "non-Mideast states" (from some 450,000 to 900,000).

In short, Arzt's projections require that by 2005 just over a third (34.4 percent) of the world's Palestinians reside in the West Bank and Gaza. Nearly two-thirds of Palestinians would therefore become permanently resettled outside of Palestine, although having access to Palestinian passports. Israel and Lebanon would take the least Palestinians (0.9 percent each); Syria would absorb some 4.8 percent; Jordan would be the home of the second largest Palestinian population (some 24 percent of the world's total); other Arab states,

presumably those in the Gulf described by Arzt as “underpopulated,” would take in some 11.6 percent of the Palestinians; and non-Arab states would account for another 10.8 percent.

Artz’s vision is to a degree linked to commonplace, though valid, considerations of Middle East politics: Lebanon insists upon the removal of virtually all the Palestinians already there; Israel is politically opposed to any return of Palestinian refugees as well as to any implication of “guilt” for the Palestinians’ plight. Can these, as well as other, regional actors be motivated to accept limited responsibility for refugee resettlement? Arzt suggests that “compensation,” as a final building-block of an overall solution is in order as an inducement. Her discussion not only raises the possibility of individual compensation to Palestinian refugees as a means of facilitating resettlement but also of “communal compensation,” in the form of infrastructural aid that could be seen by prospective host governments as beneficial to broader hopes of national development.

In many respects, the Arzt Plan could not have been better calculated to draw ire from those who feel that the peace process must inject a modicum of justice into the existence of a people who suffered rank injustice and who then suffered decades of deprivation and violence for not accepting their lot. Three major features of the Arzt Plan lead to this reaction. First, it demands that two-thirds of the Palestinian Nation effectively end their participation in that body (save for the largely symbolic holding of a passport) by accepting to reside permanently in areas beyond Palestine’s borders. Second, it appears to bend over backward to reduce both Israel’s substantive and intangible contributions to a resolution. For example, Arzt suggests that the 75,000 refugees to be permitted to resettle in Israel meet stringent criteria, including the ability to prove residency in the country in 1947. In short, Arzt (and she makes no bones about it) would require, in the interest of general—both Israeli and Arab—psychological satisfaction, only the most token gesture toward resettlement by Israel. Telling in this regard is her suggestion that financial aid to refugees resettled in Israel be in the form of low-interest loans, rather than “compensation,” as would be the case in all other cases of resettlement. The rationale is to avoid suggesting any implication of Israeli “guilt” for the Palestinians’ plight.

Yet another, and potentially very galling, element of Arzt’s proposal is the glaring contradiction between the principals she advocates as necessary for a successful “adjustment” of current Palestinian demography and the overall scheme she advocates as the vehicle toward this end. On the one hand, she insists that “all refugees will be offered

a fully informed, written choice of available residential and compensation options…"[10] On the other, a closer reading of her plan reveals that the actual geographic fate of refugees will be determined not by "choice" but by external bodies tasked with coordinating and directing the refugees' demographic "adjustment." Arzt would have more accurately described the role envisaged for refugees in her plan as limited to expressing "preferences" rather than making "choices."

Unlike Arzt's effort, Harvard's concept paper, *The Palestinian Refugee Problem and the Right of Return* (Alpher and Shikaki, 1998), does not detail the outlines of a plan for permanently settling the refugee problem. The Harvard project, bringing together influential Israelis and Palestinians over the course of two years, had the ultimate goal of introducing "insights and ideas…into the public debate and decision-making processes in the two communities" (Alpher and Shikaki, 1998: 1). Proceeding on the twin assumptions that any solution must be linked to a two-state solution (i.e. that a Palestinian state must come into being) and that any process of return would be gradual ("perhaps…over a period of ten years"), the work examines four options (Borjas et al., 1996: 5). Two are the "traditional," or maximalist Palestinian and Israeli positions (unrestricted right of return of Palestinian refugees as opposed to complete denial of refugee return to Israel with restrictions on the extent of return or resettlement in a Palestinian state as well). The group rejected them as alternatives capable of providing grounds for enduring peace. The remaining two suggestions were in effect the outcomes of efforts by Arabs and Israelis to move closer to each other's stands. No attempt was made to reconcile these final proposals. Thus, as Herbert Kelman and Nadim Rouhana note in the work's introduction: "The paper does not present a fifth option—a compromise of the compromises, as it were—that both sides could comfortably endorse." Such a task, the paper suggests, would be more properly left to the realm of official negotiations.

What emerged from the Harvard exercise, however, were substantial areas of concurrence in principle between the compromise proposals developed by Palestinian and Israeli participants. Key among these, in addition to acceptance of the need for a Palestinian state, were the following: that any solution must entail (a) a return of "a limited number of refugees" to Israel proper; (b) the return of "a larger number" to the Palestinian state; (c) the "permanent absorption" of remaining refugees in host countries; (d) compensation; and (e) that a negotiated solution should "close the file" on the refugee issue (Arzt, 1999: 15).

Obviously large gaps separated the two proposals, underscoring the serious difficulties that would remain to be overcome in arriving at a mutually acceptable concrete plan for resolving the refugee problem. In addition to differences over the nature of Israeli acknowledgment of responsibility for the refugee problem, Palestinians and Israeli participants remained unable to reach accord on such specific issues as the nature and numbers to be entailed in any return of refugees to Israel proper, the size of any return of refugees to areas of Palestine comprising the Palestinian state, and the nature and extent of compensation as a component of a settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem—and whether, or how, this would be linked to the question of Jewish refugees from Arab countries who settled in Israel.

The Arzt Plan and the results of the Harvard team's work share more similarities than differences. The latter lie principally in the distinction between Arzt's postulation of specific demographic features of her overall scheme and the Harvard group's avoidance of numbers in discussing the eventual distribution of Palestinian refugees. Moreover, the Harvard group specifically viewed the establishment of a Palestinian state as a necessary condition for resolving the refugee issue, while Arzt treated the Palestine's final political disposition as an open-ended question.

On the other hand, strong parallels exist in the works' insistence that repatriation, resettlement, and compensation be combined as tools for resolving the refugee problem; that only limited numbers of Palestinians return to Israel, while the bulk of refugees settle permanently in non-Israeli areas of Palestine and other parts of the Arab World; that full resolution will require a period of several years; and that the international community must play an active role in a settlement.[11] At bottom, of course, the parallels arise because each effort was based on the conviction that current official Israeli and Palestinian positions offer no hope of "success."

The posture of compromise represented by Arzt and the Harvard team inevitably offended vociferous elements among the main parties interested involved in the peace process. Before looking at the nature of the criticisms that have been raised, it is useful to note that by the late 1990s there began to emerge other possible signs that key players in the peace process—Israel, the PLO, the United States, and other Western powers—were quietly, but actively, exploring practical steps for pursuing the Arzt–Harvard direction and that Iraq figured prominently in such explorations.

In 1998, Saddam Hussain suddenly granted Iraqi nationality to resident Palestinians who had become refugees in 1948, a move that

was soon seen as a signal of Baghdad's willingness to receive more Palestinian refugees in exchange for international assistance in lifting the sanctions imposed against Iraq at the end of the Gulf War (Okasha, 2000). By 1999, the world press was rife with what would become ongoing, though unconfirmed, reports of Western and Israeli efforts to enlist Iraq as a partner in resolving the Palestinian refugee problem. Although similar reports had occasionally appeared since the early 1990s, the sustained and widespread nature of the spate of rumors in 1999–2000 was notable.[12] Press accounts in the Arab World and the West claimed that Washington, working through the good offices of France and Morocco, was secretly offering to support an end to the international embargo against Iraq in return for that country's agreement to the permanent resettlement within its borders of some 400,000 refugees.[13] The Israeli daily *Maariv* carried essentially the same report near the end of 1999. Citing "senior political sources" in Jerusalem, the paper also claimed that the Iraq scheme had been explicitly discussed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and U.S. President Bill Clinton.[14] Similar stories, including widespread reports of secret Israeli–Iraqi contacts, continued to appear throughout the spring of 2000.[15] During the same period, Laura Drake, a Washington-based Middle East consultant and academic, published an article in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* claiming to have confirmed, "with some of the participants," earlier rumors of an unsuccessful 1997 attempt by a U.S. congressional staff delegation to convince the six Gulf Cooperation Council states to accept massive refugee resettlement in their territories.[16]

In the late 1990s, as signs that increased consideration was being given to specific proposals for resolving the refugee problem multiplied, discourse over the issue inevitably became more heated. Just as inevitably, this emphasized the degree to which Israelis and Palestinians are divided internally. By early 2000, prominent Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, with his usual eloquence, was considerably perturbed by signs that "the . . . notorious peace process finally has come down to the one issue . . . at the core of Palestinian depredations, since 1948, the future of the refugees . . ." (Said, 2000). Said argued that the Arafat-led official PLO/PNA leadership was virtually certain to abandon claims to a comprehensive refugee right to return and, instead, accept some arrangement that would include only a token repatriation of refugees to Israel proper. For him, this would constitute yet another compromise through which Arafat manages to "sell out his people." Because Arafat's PNA regime was not only "needed by the international supporters of the peace process"

but had also proved adept at "corrupting even the best" of the Palestinian population under its control, Said maintained that the undiluted right of refugees to return to Palestine/Israel would eventually be upheld by some new leadership that "will almost certainly appear" in the Palestinian diaspora (Said, 2000).

In an article published some months earlier, Said's Columbia University colleague, Joseph Massad, offered a more extended discussion of the direction the peace process seemed to be taking. Massad castigated the official Palestinian leadership for abandoning the right of return and entering into a peace process in which "native West Bank and Gaza Palestinians are reaping the benefits of a phantasmatic state-to-be by forsaking refugee rights" (Massad, 1999: 20). He went on to argue:

> "the refugees" and the diaspora's conflict with Israel is different from that of the PA [Palestinian Authority] and its supporters. Although the Palestinian people remain one spiritually, their material interests are different. The "peace process" from Madrid to the present not only has deepened the differences between these material interests, it also rendered them contradictory . . . . (Massad, 1999: 23)

Massad denounced the proposals made by Arzt and by the Harvard group for, in his view, implicitly defining "pragmatism" in such a way as to ensure that "everything Israel rejects is 'not pragmatic,' while everything it accepts is 'pragmatic'" (Massad, 1999: 9). Indeed, Massad went on to convert the very term "pragmatic" (in the context of the peace process) into an epithet, which he freely applied to all who envisaged the possibility of a solution to the refugee problem that somehow fell short of a comprehensive return of all refugees to Palestine/Israel. Along the way, he expressed particular ire at "Palestinian comprador intellectuals" who showed signs of such pragmatism. Presumably, in his view, these would include most of the Palestinian writers and thinkers whom he criticizes for various things. Among these are: Palestinian–Jordanian journalist Rami Khouri (who wrote a foreword to Arzt's book), Khalil Shikaki, Ghassan Khatib, Ibrahim Dakkak, Yezid Sayigh, Nadim Rouhana, Nabeel Kassis (Palestinian participants in the Harvard project),[17] West Bank sociologist and member of the post-Madrid Refugee Working Group Salim Tamari (who, Massad disapprovingly notes, is on record as asserting that "Palestinian negotiators . . . operate under constraints that dictate that issues of principle and ideological predisposition be tempered by what is reasonable and obtainable")[18]; and Sari Nusseibeh (another

West Bank intellectual who more than decade ago proposed a two-state settlement that would not require a significant return of refugees to Israel proper) (Heller and Nusseibeh, 1995).

Curiously, Massad's attack on "pragmatism" ultimately turned out to be far less fundamental than it appeared at first glance. This emerged clearly in his discussion of views propounded by Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian professor at the University of Chicago. Massad noted approvingly that Khalidi is one of the few Palestinians involved in the Madrid process who opted out soon after the PLO's deal at Oslo. Although this obviously spared Khalidi from being labeled a "comprador intellectual," and while Massad approvingly noted Khalidi's view that Israel must accept guilt for the refugees' plight, he nonetheless criticized Khalidi for having written in 1994 that "to argue seriously for Israeli acceptance of unlimited liability [for refugee return] means to argue against the possibility of any real solution to this issue."[19] Yet, Massad's complaint did not focus on substance but rather on timing:

> Whereas Khalidi's pessimism is understandable, arguing seriously for unlimited Israeli liability does not mean that this is the only thing Palestinians would accept; it simply means that this should be the opening position in any negotiations . . . . (Massad, 1999: 16)

Thus, Massad was dismayed by another comment written by Khalidi in the same 1994 work: "it is inconceivable that most refugees will be allowed to exercise their right of return to their original homes in what is now Israel for the foreseeable future, or perhaps ever." Again, Massad took no issue with the probable veracity of Khalidi's observation but rather with it having been made too soon. He complained that the statement:

> unfortunately has been taken up by pro-Israeli academics (such as the Harvard Group led by Leonard Hausman), who quote Khalidi to add legitimacy to their recommendations, which amount to liquidating the refugee issue. (Massad, 1999: 16)

In short, Massad appeared to be not so opposed to either the logic or the practice of pragmatism in the politics of Middle East peacemaking as he was to the timing with which it has appeared and to many of the personalities who have been responsible for, or influenced, the Palestinian side of the discourse on refugees. Yet, even this was not really clear—for Massad also devoted much of his article to

a rhapsodic discussion of a plan proposed by Salman Abu-Sitta, "the only Palestinian intellectual to date who is not awed by what is 'realistic,' 'pragmatic,' or 'reasonable.' " Here again, Massad's views parallel those of Edward Said (2000).

In 1997, Abu-Sitta, an engineer and long-time member of the Palestine National Council, challenged the assumption that the comprehensive return of refugees to Israel would create undue demographic or economic difficulties for that country. Arguing that the Arzt proposal and similar approaches must fail because "the last fifty years have shown that the Palestinians insist on returning home," Abu-Sitta attempted to demonstrate that the influx into Israel of some 4.47 million Palestinian refugees could be accomplished in such a way as to allow "the return of the refugees to their original homes in the majority of cases, and close by in others" (Abu-Sitta, 1997: 5). Moreover, Abu-Sitta argued that this could be accomplished in ways "consistent with existing concentrations of Jews and Palestinians and with their respective occupations" (1997: 6). Only a relatively small number of Jews (154,000 at most) might voluntarily relocate to other parts of Israel "if they do not wish to mix with Palestinian farmers" (1997: 5). Abu-Sitta went on to conclude that no undue strains on economic resources (particularly water) would arise from his proposed solution.

Were Abu-Sitta to have advanced this proposal for consideration within the parameters of the post-Madrid peace process, Massad's characterization of him as unawed by the " 'realistic,' 'pragmatic,' or 'reasonable' " should have been presented without the qualifying quotation marks. But Abu-Sitta clearly realizes that his plan is a nonstarter in light of current realities.

> The negative points of the proposal are clear. Israel will not allow it, at least now. It has the military muscle, aided by the US to prevent it. Israel's justification for this denial is to protect its security and preserve its Jewishness. (Abu-Sitta, 1997: 10)

In conclusion, Abu-Sitta calls on Israel to accept the plan, and in the process to become democratic—and by implication, of course, secular. He warns that Israel, which he characterizes as "a tribal society armed with high tech," risks greater problems in the future should it cling "to the idea of Jewish purity." Thus, "the sooner Israel turns democratic, the less it will pay for peace" (Abu-Sitta, 1997: 10–11).

Abu-Sitta was merely recalling the PLO's original formula: Israel's elimination as a Jewish state and its replacement by a secular,

democratic state. There is nothing intrinsically absurd in this. Indeed for those who uphold secular, democratic values the solution seems straightforward. But it clashes with the Middle East's regional reality; one in which—save for Turkey—states are not constituted in accordance with secular, democratic principles. It must be recalled that all Arab states either assign Islam the role of official religion, or have Sharia as the source of their legal systems, or are run according to confessional arrangements. Given that the region itself is dominated by religio-tribal political cultures, one must be prepared for an extremely long wait before Israelis will abandon their Jewish state and join millions of returned refugees in a unique secular-democratic experiment. Abu-Sitta apparently did consider, or care about, the moral or practical implications of requiring the refugees to wait so long.

By the dawn of the new millennium, the developing search for practical steps to resolve the refugee problem had not only caused dissent in Palestinian circles but also among Israelis. This was particularly true among those on the far Right of Israel's political spectrum. Thus, Emanuel A. Winston, a "Middle East analyst and commentator" and strong supporter of Israel's Likud, raised an outcry against international moves, involving the United States and the EU to "flood" Israel with Palestinians (Winston, n.d.). In early 1999, moved by rumors of U.S. moves to prepare the way for refugee resettlement (which may have been linked to distorted reports—or to Winston's own misunderstanding—of the Arzt Plan) Winston railed against "a new plan floated by American Arabists" that called for some 5 million Palestinian refugees to be resettled. Of these, he claimed, 75,000 (the Arzt figure) would be returned to Israel proper, while 1.2 million (also the Arzt figure) would be settled in the West Bank and Gaza. For Winston, such a transfer of "a hostile population into the underbelly of Israel would merely be an extension of an unending war directed toward the elimination of the Jewish State" (Winston, 1999: 3). This, and any similar approach to the refugee problem, he argued, should be resisted. Yet, Winston had no faith in the Israeli government's ability to offer resistance: "Israel would protest as it has on all the broken accords. As before, no one would be listening" (Winston, 1999: 4).

It was not surprising that as final status issues more directly challenged the search for Middle East peace, discourse over the refugee problem progressively emphasized divisions between Palestinians and Israelis as well as within each camp. The issue is one that goes to the heart of the conflict between Zionists and the Palestinians, inevitably giving impetus to memories of historical injustices and fears of future ones. Emotions, particularly among those who are personally

or ideologically identified with one of the contending sides, were heightened and the same was true of suspicions that official decision-makers, through cupidity or stupidity, would violate the true collective interest.

Palestinian dissenters such as Edward Said, Joseph Massad, and Salman Abu-Sitta brought weighty criticisms to bear against both the existing track-record of Yasir Arafat's leadership in the post-Madrid period and, even more importantly, the notion that justice—from a Palestinian perspective—can be found in any solution that denies some refugees the right of return. Yet, each danced an uncomfortable intellectual ballet that disjointedly attempted to claim primary concern with refugee welfare while offering little hope of ameliorating the refugees' actual plight. This emerged most clearly, of course, in Abu-Sitta's proposal for the full return of Palestinian refugees. It was also apparent in Massad's rather inarticulate, or perhaps only confused, treatment of "pragmatism" as an element in peacemaking.

Israeli and pro-Israeli outcries over signs that increasing consideration was being given to resolving the refugee problem largely through resettlement in a Palestinian State also offered no hope of ending that hostility. Emanuel Winston decried any notion of resettlement in Israel, or in the Jewish State's vicinity. His perspective had no room for pondering a solution to the refugees' plight.

In effect, Said, Massad, Abu-Sitta, and Winston shared a firm and deep opposition to the conclusion of peace between Palestinians and Israelis within the foreseeable future.

To understand, or even to sympathize with, the emotional, historical, or intellectual roots of their stand does not require its endorsement. The post-Madrid period was characterized by the vastly greater "internationalization" of a problem that had already long been heavily "internationalized." The years since the 1991 Gulf War have reinforced recognition of two salient points: that the festering Palestine problem remains at the heart of the Arab–Israeli problem and, second, that in this age of weapons of mass destruction and global interdependence conflict between Arabs and Israelis poses a very real threat to nations far beyond the confines of the Middle East. The post-Madrid surge in the internationalization of the peace process was, and remains, grounded in the international community's recognition of self-interest.

It is therefore not only inevitable but also legitimate that "third-party" voices figure in the discourse over a final settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. Because the Palestine issue has from its inception never been a purely regional phenomenon, historical

instances of third-party attempts to resolve or prevent conflict between Jews and Arabs can shed light on the dynamics, perspectives, and normative choices attending such efforts. The course of Edward A. Norman's little studied attempt to promote the transfer of Palestine's Arab population to Iraq is such an instance.

Edward A. Norman's Campaign

Edward A. Norman was born into a wealthy Midwestern Jewish American family in 1900. His father was a successful businessman, philanthropist, and, for a period, vice president of the flourishing Sears, Roebuck & Co. Although originally from Chicago, Norman spent much of his youth on the East Coast, attending New York Military Academy and going on to Harvard, where he studied economics and sociology, receiving a B.A. in 1923. Norman settled in New York, becoming independently successful as a financier. At a time when anti-Semitism was still a widespread phenomenon in the United States, Norman's privileged background and upbringing allowed him to interact easily with elite levels of an American society in which White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values still intolerantly prevailed.

Norman died prematurely in 1955, after suffering from a hunting accident some months earlier. His obituary noted that he "assisted Israel" but was careful to state that "he was not a Zionist."[20] It was a point that Norman himself took pains to make throughout his life.

Even by 1955, there was something anachronistic in Norman's rejection of the Zionist label. The Second World War and Israel's subsequent establishment rapidly resulted in the de facto elimination of any substantial difference between Zionism and non-Zionism in an American context. Norman's insistence on his non-Zionist identification hearkened back to the pre-War days, when the two outlooks were indeed different. This must be kept in mind if Norman's approach to the Palestine issue in the 1930s is to be understood.

Several factors prevented Zionism from gaining wide acceptance among American Jews during the first decades after Herzl's consolidation of the movement at Basle in 1897. Leading sectors of the more established elements of American Jewry, primarily the assimilated descendents of German immigrants who arrived in the mid-1800s, saw Herzlian Zionism as embodying a ghetto mentality that was understandably derived from the Central and East European Jewish experience but which had no relation to Jewish life in America. American Jewish leaders also feared that political Zionism's exclusive nationalism, and its underlying assumption that Jews in predominantly gentile

societies must inevitably suffer oppression, would only fuel anti-Semitism. On the other hand, more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe were too busy establishing themselves in their adopted country to become actively involved in the Zionist cause. In l914, less than 15,000 persons formed the membership of the entire American Zionist Movement (Yaffe, 1968: 4–19; Halperin, 1961: 10–11). By 1930, with an American Jewish population in excess of four million, the combined membership of US Zionist organizations reached only slightly over 80,000. As there were overlapping memberships, the number of individuals represented by this figure was even less (Halperin, 1961: 318–20; Tschirgi, 1983: 40–4).

Although the leading elements of the American Jewish community, who prior to the Second World War were represented by the American Jewish Committee (of which Norman was secretary at the time of his death), did not abandon their rejection of political Zionism, they eventually agreed to cooperate in the development of a Jewish presence in Palestine.[21] In doing so, non-Zionists were moved by humanitarian concern for the welfare of Eastern European Jews seeking to go to Palestine as well as by an established tradition of philanthropy.

It was around 1930 that Edward Norman first became actively concerned with the Palestine problem.[22] Characterized by a strong intellectual bent, Norman first manifested his interest by a wide-ranging research of available (English language) literature on Palestine and the Middle East.[23] This was soon followed by visits to Palestine. Inevitably, given Norman's unfamiliarity with Arabic, the exercise essentially provided him with an outlook derived mainly from official British as well as Zionist and pro-Zionist sources.

By 1934, Norman not only felt that he was beginning to understand the nature of the problem in Palestine but also to perceive how it might be resolved in a manner beneficial to all parties. The essence of the issue at the local level, he believed, was economic: increasing Jewish settlement threatened the livelihood of Palestinian Arabs, particularly the peasantry. Norman was skeptical of the Zionist prohibition of Arab Labor on Jewish-owned land, believing the practice "could only result in disturbances . . . "[24] On the other hand, he did not see "the Palestine problem" as primarily a product of local dynamics:

> The local aspect of the Palestine problem . . . is not basic in that the origins of the problem are in many parts of the world, where persecuted, or discontented, or unwanted Jews desire to settle in Palestine. . . . (Norman, 1938: 1)

Thus, while recognizing the explosive impact of Zionist labor policy, Norman ultimately upheld the practice of excluding Arab labor because of Palestine's importance to Jewish emigration from hostile environments. In short, Norman's goal was to ease the entrance of large numbers of Jews into Palestine by defusing what he saw as the only understandable cause of Arab opposition: economic dislocation. This, he concluded, could be achieved through a single plan that would simultaneously lead to a large-scale exodus of Palestinian Arabs and provide those same Arabs with economic opportunities and a living standard far above what they might have in Palestine.

Norman saw Iraq as the key to ending Jewish–Arab friction in Palestine, an idea that seems likely to have been inspired by a book that the eminent Oxford orientalist Edwyn Bevan published in 1918.[25] Iraq, Norman discovered, suffered from underpopulation and significant amounts of undeveloped but potentially rich agricultural land. It had also in recent years made use of oil revenues to invest heavily in the improvement of its irrigation system—yet lacked the manpower to capitalize on this investment. Norman concluded that Palestinian peasants, most of whom were tenant farmers rather than landowners in their own right, could be persuaded to emigrate to Iraq if several vital preconditions were met. Among these were: that they be given the opportunity to own plots of land that were significantly larger than the land they farmed as tenants in Palestine; that their move to and initial experience in Iraq be financially subsidized; that concrete evidence of successful Palestinian emigration initially be amassed through experimental pilot projects; and, finally, that the entire possibility of Palestinian emigration be generally seen as initiated by the Iraqi government, which would cooperate fully in the venture.

This last was vitally important to Norman. Initially, Norman appears to have considered attempting to enlist official Iraqi support himself. However, he was soon persuaded that "under prevailing conditions in the Near East, the motives of any Jew would be suspect..." (Norman, 1939: 1). The result was that Norman spent considerable time, effort, and money on the tactical problem of how best to pursue his plan.

Before looking briefly at this aspect of Norman's effort to help resolve the Palestine problem, it is necessary to note certain key features of the plan he eventually devised. Foremost among these is that the scheme did not envisage the "expulsion" of Arabs from Palestine. On the contrary, it was predicated on the voluntary emigration of Palestinian Arabs. Second, it did not contemplate a massive, sudden

exodus of Palestinian Arabs:

> This plan does not contemplate the sudden and immediate moving of many thousands of Palestinian Arabs. It is certain that at first no large number could be persuaded to move. Probably, the plan would have to be initiated by first finding a very few villages that might be interested in improving their economic position by migration to Iraq where they could have larger and more productive property in a developing country, where they would be part of the dominant element without fear of restriction of any kind by a foreign population (such as the Jews, who are settling in Palestine), and where those who heretofore had been debt-ridden tenants could hope to become freehold independent landowners . . . If these villages succeeded in Iraq and good reports could be brought back from there to Palestine, it is more than likely that thereafter the work could be accelerated considerably. . . . (Norman, 1938: 8)

Indeed, Norman argued that the process he suggested would require "twenty-five to thirty years" to complete. While it is clear that he hoped the end product would be a drastic, possibly virtually total, absence of Arabs from Palestine, the plan did not at all necessarily call for this.[26] What it sought at minimum was a significant reduction of the Palestinian peasantry.

Another feature of Norman's outlook that must be stressed is that he did not believe that "the Jewish problem" of the 1930s could be solved through immigration into Palestine. As late as 1939, he insisted that "even under the very best of conditions, Palestine could not absorb from an economic point of view more than 50,000 immigrants a year at a maximum."[27] Norman, then, directed his effort toward securing the welfare of what he saw as a limited community of Jews in Palestine rather than the solution to the worldwide "Jewish problem." This, of course, was fully in keeping with his non-Zionist mentality.

Finally, Norman's approach was not unfeeling or callous in regard to the fate of Palestinians who would opt to go to Iraq. His proposal went into detail concerning such matters as means of transport, the fate of emigrating Palestinians' chattel and lands, cultural affinities between the projected emigrants and Iraqi society, the need for independent, expert studies to determine the true suitability of relocation sites in Iraq, and the necessity of expert Arabic-speaking advisors to facilitate the success of Palestinian farmers in their new Iraqi environment.

In short, Norman was not only interested in assuring the economic success of his proposed emigrants but also their psychological welfare. In a word, he wanted them to be happy.

Here, in that one word, "happy," is both an element of innocence and tragedy in Norman's vision. For at bottom, his approach to the Palestine issue in the 1930s was what in today's jargon is termed a "win-win" approach. Nobody was supposed to lose. By the time his plan was finally formulated, after nearly a decade of effort, it aimed at ensuring:

- That Jews would be happy because their immigration into Palestine would be nonconflictive.
- That Palestinian Arabs would be happy because of new and prosperous economic horizons in Iraq.
- That the British Empire would be happy because its interests would not be threatened by constant upheavals in Palestine.
- That the U.S. government would be happy because it would no longer be torn by conflicting pressures arising from the need to cultivate Arab friendship and satisfy pro-Zionist domestic public opinion (Norman, 1938).

Oxford orientalist Edwyn Bevan's comment, in a September 11, 1936 letter to the *Times* that indirectly supported Norman's plan, provides a partial epitaph to the scheme. After first noting that the Palestine problem appeared "so insoluble just because both sides, both Arabs and Jews, have so strong a case," Bevan prefaced what amounted to a veiled support of Norman's proposal by commenting: "Yet, there is perhaps a solution which, if men were reasonable beings, would be within the range of hope."[28] Men, as Norman would learn, are not "reasonable beings," for their makeup is not simply rational but also emotional. This largely accounts for the failure of Norman's approach. However, if Norman was "romantically rationale" in the hope he held for his plan, he proved to be most "rationally realistic" in pursuing it—until world events put the final touches on its epitaph.

Norman was not a man to rush things. Although the plan's essential components were clear in his mind by 1934, it was not until early 1937 that he first began to circulate a refined version of the scheme. Norman approached the powerful banker Felix Warburg, who proved so enthusiastic over the proposal that he offered to provide ten times the funds Norman might contribute to the plan.[29]

Encouraged by this encounter with Warburg, Norman further fine-tuned the proposal and then, in late summer 1937, "submitted it to

a number of leading personages in the United States." His interlocutors were supportive, but they, as well as Warburg, felt that nothing could be done until it were known whether Iraq would "be interested in obtaining a substantial immigration of Arab cultivators, of the same race and tradition as the bulk of the Iraq population, to strengthen the general economy of the country . . . " (Norman, 1939: 1).

In late 1937, Norman set off for England in search of someone who might discover the answer to this question, "a man who was not a Jew and who at the same time would be 'personal grata' to the Iraqians" (Norman, 1939: 1). Through the aid of influential acquaintances in London, he hit upon H.T. Montague Bell, "a man in the early sixties who knew the orient thoroughly, and whom I found to be entirely in sympathy with the objectives of my scheme." A writer and journalist, Bell had lived much of his life in China but also "spent three years in Baghdad . . . and was on friendly terms with all the leading personalities, including the King" (Norman, 1939: 2).

Montague Bell was in Baghdad by mid-February 1938, under instructions to learn the Iraqi attitude in principle to large-scale immigration from the Arab World and:

> if possible also to implant in the minds of the leading personages of Iraq the germ of the idea that their country's greatest need is immigration, that it must be made up of Arabs like themselves . . . and that the only place where any quantity of such people might be found who might have an economic reason of their own for going to Iraq is Palestine. (Norman, 1939: 3)

Norman's agent remained in Iraq for six weeks. His cover story was that he was preparing to write articles on Iraq's economic development for the British and American press: "This objective," noted Norman, "made it seem reasonable for him to ask searching questions of all the leading people, and thus to cause them to formulate the answers along the lines that we desired." It was a busy period for Bell, who spent the time "traveling all over the country" and discussing the country's affairs with Iraqi leaders and British officials, and who, finally, not only had audience with the king but was also guest of honor at a dinner hosted by the Prime Minister that was "attended by the entire cabinet" (Norman, 1939: 3).

Upon returning to England, Bell enthusiastically reported that he was "definitely convinced" of the feasibility of Norman's project, "if properly handled." He further claimed to have "already aroused considerable interest on the part of the leading Iraqis in [the essence

of Norman's scheme], without their knowing, however, that that is what he came there for" (Norman, 1939: 3).

Montague Bell continued to be employed by Norman, remaining in England to write articles stressing Iraq's need of additional population to realize its economic potential. Copies of these would be sent "to all the leading Iraqians, in the hope that they will be stimulated to further thought on the subject" (Norman, 1939: 4). Bell's pieces appeared at intervals in the *Times* and other publications throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 1938.

In the meantime, Norman returned to the United States, where within months he for the first time informed the U.S. government of his activities. By November 1938, Norman's path to the State Department had been paved by a host of luminaries within the Roosevelt administration. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis put Norman in touch with one of Roosevelt's top aides, Benjamin Cohen, who, in turn arranged for a meeting with Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. Norman not only explained his plan, apparently in some detail, but also informed Welles of his intention to return soon to England. He requested that the U.S. embassy in London help him meet with British Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald. Welles agreed to arrange this and then channeled Norman to Herbert Feis, the Department's Adviser on International Economic Affairs and the man who at Roosevelt's behest would subsequently lead Washington's futile effort to obtain direct control of American oil concessions in Saudi Arabia.[30] Feis, in turn, introduced Norman to members of the Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), which was responsible for handling the Palestine issue.[31]

Norman first gave a comprehensive explanation of the plan to NEA's Assistant Chief Paul Alling. Before doing so, however, Norman stressed that, although Jewish, he was not a Zionist, that he believed Zionist leaders "misled their followers," and that he considered Zionism "a pure racket."[32]

It was also during the fall of 1938 that Norman met Wallace Murray, who had served as NEA's chief since 1929 and was to remain in that post until 1945. Murray was favorably impressed, both by Norman's Iraq scheme and by Norman himself. Indeed, the NEA chief became Norman's principal ally in the State Department. On at least three occasions over the next year and half, Murray supported Norman's requests for active aid from the department. The first of these occurred in the summer of 1939, when Norman was alarmed by a rumor that Roosevelt was preparing to take the initiative in launching the Iraq proposal. Warning that this was sure to misfire,

Norman asked that he be allowed to continue his own efforts so that the idea would "first be proposed by the Iraqis." Roosevelt, he added, would "then be in a position to come forward as a humanitarian responding to an appeal made by an Arab kingdom for the benefit of itself and all other Arabs and only incidentally involving any benefit to Jews."[33] Murray, while doubting the rumor's validity, nonetheless strongly concurred with Norman's gloomy assessment of any possible White House initiative. He urged Undersecretary of State Welles to speak with Roosevelt, adding that "if . . . there is any likelihood that the President has in mind any such plan . . . it would seem desirable to acquaint him with the background of the situation."[34]

A second instance of Murray's support of the Iraq scheme occurred months later, when the NEA chief, apparently unsuccessfully, sought to help Norman arrange a meeting with the president.[35]

Finally, State Department records show that Murray was still actively trying to facilitate Norman's efforts as late as April 1940, when he offered to allow Norman to send instructions to Montague Bell through the U.S. embassy in London. Although Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy refused to allow the embassy to be a vehicle for private correspondence, Murray succeeded in having one of the embassy's staff, Herschel V. Johnson, give Bell the message orally.[36]

Such were the practical results of the appraisal of Norman that Murray had offered in mid-1939:

> Personally I was very much impressed with Mr. Norman's reasonable views on the Palestine problem and his sincere desire to effect a settlement which would be fair to both the Jews and the Arabs.[37]

Wallace Murray's approach to Norman's Iraq plan belies the widespread myth that officials in the State Department, and particularly those in the NEA, "bore unmistakable traces of anti-Semitism" in dealing with the Palestine issue (Cohen, 1988: 21). As chiefs of NEA (after 1945, the Office of Near East and African Affairs) Wallace Murray and his successor, Loy Henderson, have figured largely in the Zionist demonology, charged with being at best inveterately "anti-Zionist" and at worst anti-Semites (Tschirgi, 1983: 34; see also Davidson, 1999). Yet, Murray and his colleagues were fully aware that Norman aimed to promote the emigration of the bulk of Palestine's Arabs in order to permit the massive immigration of Jews. They could not have been oblivious to the possibility that this, despite Norman's ideological non-Zionism, would enhance the chances of a Jewish state arising in Palestine. Moreover, by early 1939, NEA officials were fully

aware that leading Zionists, including Chaim Weizmann, had been apprised of, and were encouraging, Norman's efforts. Neither anti-Semitism nor an essential disdain of Zionism figured in the state department's reaction to Norman's proposal. Instead, as I have pointed out elsewhere:

> under Murray, as under Henderson, those who daily conducted the department's policies toward the Middle East voiced little concern over whether Arab or Jew would ultimately rule Palestine—so long as the process of resolving that issue did not adversely affect recognized American interests outside Palestine. (Tschirgi, 1983)

By the late 1930s, with war a growing menace in Europe and Palestine increasingly becoming a source of tension in the Middle East, the State Department was understandably inclined to welcome any plan that might end the threat of clashes between Arabs and Jews. Had Murray and his colleagues been either anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist, Norman's plan could have easily become a target for attack—not least because of its dependence on the esoteric art of subliminal salesmanship as practiced by Montague Bell. It must be concluded that they were willing to allow Norman to pursue his win-win scheme, if only on the off chance that it might succeed. Much the same appears to have been true of President Roosevelt, who knew the details of Norman's campaign as early as 1938.[38]

However, neither the president nor the State Department could prevent Norman's campaign from eventually being caught up in the sweep of major historical events. By the time Norman first took his plan to Washington in the fall of 1938, the British government was already searching for ways to strengthen its position in the Middle East by mollifying the Arabs' growing anger over Palestine. London announced plans for a conference on the Palestine issue to which, in addition to Zionists and representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and Egypt would be invited. This subsequently proved to be the first step toward the reduction of Britain's support of Zionism announced by the well-known White Paper of May 1939.

At almost the same time, Montague Bell, still in Norman's employ, set off for Baghdad, where he intended to spend the winter in the hope of:

> further influencing the Iraqi leaders [and] being able by early spring to have them say to him that they definitely wanted immigration from Palestine and were asking him, as a well-informed friend of the

> country who had many connections in London, if upon his return there he would be interested in trying to find parties who would be prepared to examine the question of advancing the necessary finances. (Norman, 1939: 3)

This time, Bell took with him one of his daughters, who undoubtedly functioned as hostess after they "rented a comfortable house in Baghdad for the season" (Norman, 1939: 3).

With Bell continuing to try to implant the idea of massive Palestinian immigration in the minds of leading Iraqis, Norman hurried off to England, where he hoped to become involved in the London Conference. Norman's personal agenda was multiple. By this time, the British government as well as the Zionist leadership knew of his plan. Among other things, Norman worried that either or both of these parties might use the conference to broach the possibility of emigration to Iraq as an escape from the Zionist–Arab impasse. More convinced than ever that any such move would instantly strip the alternative of any viability, Norman was anxious to ensure that neither the British nor Zionists would allude to anything resembling his plan. Norman also wished to explore the extent to which Zionists were willing to consider contributing to the plan's financial requirements should the Iraqis ultimately respond as he hoped. Finally, Norman hoped that the London Conference might provide an opportunity for him to interact directly with high Iraqi officials.

Norman arrived in London on New Years Eve, unable to know that 1939 would see the onset of a world war that would very soon lay waste to the ten years he had devoted to his plan. He remained in England until late March. In the interval, several events seemed to auger well for his scheme.

In mid-January, Norman met with Malcolm MacDonald, secretary of state for the colonies and Sir John Shuckburgh, deputy under secretary for the colonies and the head of the Colonial Office's Middle Eastern Division. He was gratified to receive assurances that no British official would mention the possibility of Palestinian emigration to Iraq at the upcoming conference, which convened in February (Norman, 1939: 4).

During the following weeks Norman not only met, but also developed "a strong feeling of mutual endeavor with," members of the highest levels of the Zionist leadership, all of whom were supportive of his plan and all of whom agreed with "the advisability of allowing it to come forward from the Iraqi side." Among these were Chaim Weizmann, David Ben Gurion, and Moshe Shertok. "They assured

me," reported Norman glowingly, "that it was their intention, in order not to cause confusion, to participate in the work on this Iraq scheme only when and if I asked for their assistance" (Norman, 1939: 4).

Norman's hope of meeting leading Arabs began to materialize shortly after the London Conference's opening. A well-connected Member of Parliament informally revealed:

> that some of the important Arab delegates at the conference had told him that they were willing and anxious to cooperate with the Jews in developing Palestine and the various Arab countries, and willing to permit a very large Jewish immigration, if arrangements could be made on a non-political basis. (Norman, 1939: 5)

Norman pursued this lead, as a result of which his M.P. acquaintance arranged a luncheon. In addition to Norman, the guests included the head of the Iraqi delegation to the London Conference, Tawfik As-Suwaidy, and Abdul Rahman Azzam, then Egypt's minister to Iraq and a member of the Egyptian delegation (and later the first secretary general of the Arab League). Quite understandably, Norman's report of that encounter conceals neither his excitement nor satisfaction at witnessing what seemed to be the first fruits of his long and careful effort:

> At this lunch, these Arab gentlemen spoke of the vast and unutilized economic potentialities of Iraq. I evidenced interest in this conversation and as a result spent the balance of the day with them at their hotel. They undertook to impress on me that Iraq could support a much greater population then it now contains, that it needed to increase at once, that the Palestinian Arab peasants constituted the most desirable immigrants, and that the Jews had an opportunity to decrease the Arab element in Palestine by cooperating in financing the migration. I was aware that they were quoting the ideas that had been implanted in their minds without their perceiving it by Mr. Bell, whose reports to me had mentioned those men as among those with whom he had had frequent and long talks. (Norman, 1939: 5–6)

As-Suwaidy, Azzam, and Norman agreed to meet in Baghdad to "discuss ways and means of cooperation." Because of personal commitments already assumed by Norman, it was decided that he would visit Iraq "in October or November, 1939" (Norman, 1939: 5–6).

In mid-March, the London Conference dissolved, without having moved the situation in Palestine toward an Arab–Zionist settlement. In May, the British government issued a White Paper that severely limited its support of the Zionist project. In September, Germany

invaded Poland, Britain and France declared war, and the Second World War became a reality.

Norman did not immediately see this as the end of his plan for Palestine. Strongly encouraged by Chaim Weizmann, he pursued his plans to travel to Iraq in the fall of 1939, although it appears that these plans ultimately collapsed. Perhaps this caused Norman, to seek the State Department's help in communicating with Montague Bell in November of that year: the message relayed orally by the U.S. embassy's Herschel V. Johnson instructed Bell to go to Iraq.

It is unclear whether Bell responded to this call. Had he done so, he would have soon found Iraq gripped by deep internal turmoil. In 1940, the virulently anti-British, nationalist leader Rashid Ali al-Gaylani became Iraq's prime minister. Within a few months, encouraged by German machinations, he was at the center of the "Golden Square" pro-Axis coup against the monarchy that led to Britain's 1941 military intervention in that country.

Norman's campaign for a win-win settlement of the Zionist–Arab controversy in Palestine may have been Quixotic from the start, but the outbreak of world war was the immediate cause of its demise.

Conclusion

The British leader who failed at Suez, Anthony Eden, can be remembered for reminding us that in the Middle East—and perhaps by extension, in history—issues have a way of coming "full circle." Certainly, this appears to be true with regard to today's Palestine problem. The original clash between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish colonists, after being filtered through decades of conflict between the Jewish State and Arab States, now moves toward a point at which the original question again becomes salient: whether Arab or Jew, or somehow both, will prevail in Palestine.

Various answers, promoted in various ways by various actors, have already been tried. Hardline Zionists, stemming from Jabotinsky's Revisionist Branch, have insisted that all Palestine must fall under Jewish sway; hardline anti-Zionists of various persuasions in the Arab World—ranging from secular-nationalist to Islamic purists—have insisted that all Palestine must fall under Arab sway. The history of moderates on both sides who hoped to find a workable compromise has been one of elimination, either through physical destruction or political marginalization. The dynamics of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict quickly became controlled by the combined power of those on each side who had no interest in compromise.

The result was the long trial-by-force that led to the current situation. Eventually, the physical and political resources commanded by Israel produced the Arab World's limited retreat: Israel's legitimacy was accepted, as was the need of a comprehensive peaceful settlement on that basis. On the other hand, the resources (again, physical and political) commanded by Israel's Arab antagonists eventually led to the Jewish State's limited retreat: the reality and legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism was acknowledged, as was the notion that it must be somehow satisfied.

This process was partly fueled simply by time, by the experience of decades of war as it affected all participants. But it was also heavily affected by the policies of third parties, those who found that Arab–Israeli enmity progressively threatened important interests of their own, which had no intrinsic linkages to the quarrel between Arabs and Israel. The combined effects of militarily significant technological advances, the globalization of economic interdependence, and the Palestine problem's regionally destabilizing impact underlay the international community's support of the Madrid peace initiative in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War. In short, the potential harm entailed by continued Arab–Israeli conflict became unacceptable to the rest of the world. The post-Madrid internationalization of the Middle East peace process was neither accidental nor altruistic. It was rooted in third-party perceptions of self-interest.

The final collapse of the Oslo Process by the beginning of 2001 terminated the post-Madrid drive for Middle East peace, and the events of September 11 of that year led to a reordering of the West's political agenda in the Middle East. With priority now given to pursuing the "War on Terrorism," the promotion of Middle East peacemaking was pushed to the backburners of Western—and particularly U.S.—attention.

As of this writing (winter 2002), it is impossible to predict when, or under what circumstances, the search for definitive peace between Israel and the Arab World will resume with full vigor. Given the currently high prospect of a major war between a U.S.-led Western coalition and Iraq, the chances appear high that a renewed peace process will be conducted within a significantly changed regional environment. The most that can be said with any degree of certainty at this point is that any revived Palestinian–Israeli peace process is that Palestinians and Israelis will quickly confront each other over "final status" issues, and particularly over the issue of resolving the refugee problem in the context of an overall settlement. It is because of this that Edward Norman's campaign, waged when the basic conflict

between Arabs and Jews in Palestine was largely undiluted, carries particularly relevant lessons regarding links between perceptions, values, and consequences in the pursuit of Middle East peace.

Perhaps the most striking features of the Norman episode is the clarity with which it reveals the colonialist, or imperialist, perspective that was so largely responsible for the Palestine problem in the first place. The mindset underlying that outlook is shown in its pristine essence, as a complex mixture of a complacent, but firmly held, sense of superiority, a corresponding conviction in the universal justice of one's own objectives, and—on this basis—an utter inability to hear, much less to understand, "the other." It could not be otherwise. That "other"—the colonized—may protest, but does so only because he is as yet unable to appreciate the benefits to be gained from the colonizer's universal justice. His complaint is therefore not real. All this, of course, leads to an inevitable corollary: the colonialist mentality readily and unquestionably accepts that all available power is to be employed in the pursuit of desired goals.

Norman, the U.S. State Department, and Zionists had different goals in the late 1930s. Norman sought to end friction between Arabs and Jews in order to facilitate the massive immigration of Jews into Palestine; Washington wanted to prevent instability in the Middle East; Zionists pursued the goal of a Jewish state (but were divided over the degree to which this should be qualified by the need for friendly relations with the Arabs). What Norman, the State Department, and the Zionists most strongly shared was a colonialist mentality.

Thus, while all were aware of Palestinian Arab opposition to Jewish immigration, they shared Norman's conviction that Palestinian nationalism had no substantial reality; that it was chimerical, a meaningless label mistakenly taken as the source of Arabs' rejection of Zionism. The same outlook obtained with regard to Arab nationalism as a whole. Norman's effort to "implant" the essentials of his plan in the minds of Iraqi leaders and his belief that the Palestinian peasantry would voluntarily flock to Iraq once the benefits of resettlement became evident were therefore easily accepted as reasonable elements of a promising strategy. Within the same framework, Norman's belief that his plan would provide greater long-term happiness for Palestinian peasants was also credible.

In terms of the values that underlay Norman's plan and the consequences of his campaign, the lesson is most concisely found in the proverb "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." That Norman's intentions were good should not be doubted. His approach to the Palestine issue was neither exclusive nor particularistic. It was,

rather, rooted in a genuine and universally oriented humanitarianism. Thus, while he was motivated in the first instance by a concern for his European coreligionists, he sought to promote a plan that he sincerely believed would also benefit the Palestinian Arabs. In this he was strikingly different from the majority of American non-Zionists, who under the same stimulus soon cast their support to the Zionists with no regard for the Palestinians' fate.

Only in one sense can Norman's campaign be seen as having had any real consequences—and these were diametrically opposed to what he had tried to achieve. In seeking to further his plan at the highest U.S. and British policy-making circles as a win-win alternative, Norman could only have sustained and reinforced the prevailing colonialist mentality—the mindset that so heavily contributed to the events that produced the ensuing war-torn decades in the Middle East.

Much has been learned, at great cost, in the time since Norman and those who supported his plan so confidently dismissed Palestinian nationalist sentiment as insubstantial. The major change has been in the general perceptions of the Palestinians. The struggle Arabs launched under the mandate was both an expression of Palestinian nationalism and a vehicle to drive home its reality to others. Only in the late 1980s did the United States—the last important third-party actor to reject that reality—drop its insistence that Palestinian nationalism need not be confronted as a real political force. Only in the course of the post-Madrid peace process did Israel follow suit.

That Palestinian nationalism must be satisfied to the extent that this is compatible with reaching the goal of a definitive Arab–Israeli peace has in effect become as much a pillar of the internationalized peace process as the principle that Israel's desire for security must be satisfied to the limits permitted by that same objective. This rather algebraic formulation, I believe, essentially captures the dominant drift of thought shaping the ethos of the post-Madrid peace process. In concrete terms, it explains the growing acceptance of the notion that peace must rest upon the creation of a viable Palestinian state, a Jerusalem that is not fully dominated by Israel, and a resolution of the refugee problem that will not threaten Israel's security as a Jewish State.

The last point underscores the difficulties addressed in this chapter. Demographic growth among both Palestinians and Israelis, limited natural resources, and the Jewish identity for which Israel is prepared to seek peace all dictate that peace cannot be achieved on the basis of the return of all refugees to Palestine/Israel. Abu-Sitta's calculations notwithstanding—even if they are correct, which is in itself questionable—political reality will not permit peace on that basis.

The choice, then, is simply one between peace or no peace, with all the attendant dangers entailed by the latter.

In its internationalized post-Madrid context, the peace process clearly seems to be identifying the price that must be paid for peace: that a very large portion of the refugees must abandon hope of returning to Palestine/Israel. This development has occurred because third-party actors in the peace process have concluded that the absence of peace is not worth "all the attendant dangers." In an age that is (to repeat) increasingly threatened by weapons of mass destruction and marked by increasing global interdependence, this—from a third-party viewpoint—is an eminently rational conclusion.

What this means is that while the cries for absolute justice emitted by Said and Massad may be sympathetically understood, they must, from a third-party standpoint, also be dismissed. So too must Abu-Sitta's technical argumentation on behalf of a proclaimed long-range win-win solution that will undo the Jewish State. The same is true of Winstonesque demands for a degree of Israeli security that would permit no return of refugees and, therefore, no peace.

Edward Norman's adventures highlight a commonplace truth: third-party actors will act in light of perceived self-interest, which means they will direct the use of power toward self-interest. Looking at the fragmentary evidence currently available, it seems very probable that third parties in a renewed peace process will bend their efforts to promote movement along lines indicated by the Arzt Plan, or the Harvard Group's Report, or the rumors concerning deals with Iraq. Outcries against the "injustice" involved in the common thread of requiring the resettlement of vast numbers of Palestinians outside of Palestine/Israel will not alter this third-party perspective. "Justice" is subject to many sincerely held definitions, and a utilitarian one ("the greatest good for the greatest number") is compelling for third-party responses to the Israeli–Palestinian issue. There is simply no reason why third parties should sympathize with either side's demands for absolute justice or absolute security, and there are very compelling reasons why they should not.

However, the Norman episode also emphasizes the insidious hubris of a colonialist mentality, the notion that "the other" can be manipulated for his own good. There are likely to be some millions of Palestinian refugees who will be unable to return to Palestine/Israel. To treat them, as Norman approached all Palestinians and Arabs, as objects to be manipulated into a scenario, would amount to no more than a revival of colonialist patterns, with the same sorts of dangers they raised in the past. If the currently dispossessed are treated simply as

objects to be moved on maps in order to facilitate the objectives of key political actors—the PLO/PNA, Israel, the third parties involved in the peace process—they will eventually react, and peace may well be lost.

Edward Said is very likely correct in predicting the rise of new leaders among the refugees, leaders who will seek—and find—ways to continue the struggle on behalf of a comprehensive right of return. This outcome probably cannot be avoided. However it is possible to limit the degree to which such leaders will find support, and thereby limit the threat their movements may pose to peace in the Middle East.

What is missing in today's efforts to approach the refugee problem is the refugees themselves. Their fate, as a group, seems sure to be mixed. Current discussion of alternatives is limited, esoteric, and misleading. There is no option for "comprehensive return," but this has yet to be universally admitted. It should be.

It is on these terms that the refugees should be brought into the discourse related to a solution to their status. The sad truth is that mechanisms to facilitate this are not in place and, moreover, that any effort to create them will generate intense opposition from both the existing Arafat-led official Palestinian leadership and from Palestinian proponents of absolute justice. Yet, the effort should be made. It will promote a sorely needed injection of reality into the search for ways to resolve the refugee problem. It will allow refugees to confront and participate in solving the real problem they currently confront. It will also give them the opportunity to reinforce what should be the underlying ethos of the internationalized peace process: for many refugees the solution will not be the best, but it must be the best of the second best.

Notes

1. "Palestinian Refugees: An Overview," Palestine Refugee ResearchNet, on-line: www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/proverview.html. See also, Barbara-Ann Smith, "The Palestinian Refugees' Future," Unpublished manuscript. I am indebted to Ms. Smith, a graduate student at the American University in Cairo, for her yeoman work in reviewing and analyzing the large universe of disparate estimates of the size of today's Palestinian refugee population.
2. General Assembly Official Records, Fifty-Third Session, Supplement No. 13(A/53/13), Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, July 1, 1997–June 30, 1990, table 1, October 2, 1998 [report on-line], internet: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpa/refug_f.htm.

3. "Palestinian Refugees: An Overview," Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet, op cit., table 2, UNWRA Registered Refugees (June 1995).
4. "Controversy Over Palestinians' Future in Lebanon," *The Middle East Times*, October 1, 1999.
5. "Jordan Upholds Refugees' Rights But Will Take No More," *Mideast Mirror*, 14 (130), July 10, 2000.
6. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1996. Chapter 4 is available on-line: www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/papers.
7. http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/papers/arch-4.html., pp. 1–4.
8. The phrase is Arzt's recommendation to President Clinton regarding what he might tell Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasir Arafat when meeting with them in early 2000. It was offered at a Brookings Institution's Sadat Forum in late 1999 (Arzt, 1999).
9. http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/papers/arch-4.html., p. 6.
10. Ibid., p. 3.
11. The Harvard group was not as explicit as Arzt on this last point. However, the concept paper's discussion of compensation leaves no doubt of the assumption that third-party actors would play major roles in an overall approach to the refugee issue (Alpher and Shikaki, 1998: 11–13).
12. For example, in 1994 British and Israeli newspapers claimed that Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz had met in Morocco with two Iraqi-born Israeli ministers, Benyamin Ben Eliezer and Moshe Shahal, for a wide-ranging round of talks on a variety of subjects, including the possible resettlement in Iraq of Palestinian Refugees residing in Lebanon (Kidron, 1994: 3).
13. U.S. Scheme to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Iraq, *Mideast Mirror*, October 13, 1999, on-line: www.idrel.com/lb/shufme/archives/docsme/memirror991013.html.
14. *Maariv*, December 13, 1999, cited in "Israel Reportedly Opens Secret Negotiations with Iraq," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, 1 (12), December 1999, p. 1, on-line: www.meib.org/articles/ 9912_me4.html.
15. See, for example, "Palestinian Refugees May Be Displaced to Iraq," *IANA Radionet*, May 22, 2000, on-line: www.ianaradionet.com/E_newstext, 2000/may/5_22.html.
16. The story confirmed by Drake is that New York Congressman, and member of the House International Relations Committee, Benjamin Gilman, sent a group of congressional staff, under Deborah Bohdlander, "Gilman's top pro-Israeli staffer," to hold security-related discussions with the Gulf governments. In the course of this mission, the staff delegation raised the request that each of the GCC countries "agree to receive 30,000 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon." The Gulf countries reportedly declined (Drake, 2000: 11–12).

17. Massad points out that Kassis did not participate in the final drafting of the group's report (1999: 10).
18. Massad's emphasis. Masaad refers to Tamari's publication *Palestinian Refugee Negotiation: From Madrid to Oslo II*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1962. Tamari suggests in that work that in exchange for Arab and Palestinian agreement "to absorb the bulk of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, and Arab host countries, Israel should absorb a limited number of refugees" while compensation should be paid to all refugees.
19. Heller and Nusseibeh (1995: 16), citing Khalidi (1994: 21).
20. "E.A. Norman Dies; Assisted Israel," *New York Times*, June 21, 1955.
21. In 1929, the Council of the Jewish Agency for Palestine was enlarged and restructured so that 40 % of its seats came to be reserved for U.S. non-Zionists.
22. Memorandum of Conversation by Paul Alling, Proposal for Settlement of Palestine Problem, November 16, 1938, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1930–1939 [hereafter cited as NA], FW 867n.01/1618, p. 3.
23. The notes attached to Norman's "An Approach to the Arab Question in Palestine" are indicative of his effort (see Norman, 1938).
24. Memorandum of conversation by Paul Alling, November 16, 1938, op cit.
25. It is likely that Norman came across this book once his interest in Palestine and the Middle East was aroused. In his "Approach to the Arab Question in Palestine," Norman quotes at length from a letter Bevan wrote to the *London Times* in September 1936. Bevan recalled that his book had "pointed out that the great difficulty in restoring Iraq to something of its former splendour was the sparseness of its present population." Bevan then went on to support each of the major points of Norman's plan, without directly mentioning either Norman or the existence of such a plan.
26. Ibid. Norman hoped that once Iraq's attraction to Palestinians became clear, perhaps as many as 50,000 Palestinians per year would opt for emigration. This, of course, would have emptied Palestine of Arabs well before the 20- to 30-year period he postulated for the plan's duration.
27. Memorandum of conversation by Paul Alling, November 16, 1938, op cit., p. 3.
28. Ibid., citing Edwyn Bevan to the *Times*, September 11, 1936.
29. "Memorandum of Conversation by Paul Alling," November 16, 1938, op cit., p. 2.
30. See "Multinational Oil Corporations and U.S. Foreign Policy—Report together with individual views, to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, by the Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations" (Washington, January 2, 1975, U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 6, on-line: www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/oil.html.

31. "Memorandum of Conversation by Paul Alling," November 16, 1938, op cit., p. 1.
32. Ibid., p. 2.
33. Edward A. Norman to Welles, July 27, 1939, NA, 867n.01/1649.
34. Murray to Welles, July 31, 1939, NA, 867n.01/1649.
35. Murray to Welles, November 30, 1939, NA, 867n.01/1670.
36. Johnson to Murray, Cable 877, April 8, 1940 and Murray to Welles, April 10, 1940, NA, 867n.01/1708; Johnson to Murray, April 11, 1940, NA, 867n.01/1711; Johnson to Murray, Cable 998, NA, 867n.01/1709.
37. Murray to Adolph A. Berle, June 13, 1939, attached to Memorandum of Conversation, "Proposal for Settlement of the Palestine Problem," June 7, 1939, NA, 867n.01/1618.
38. In the summer of 1939, Roosevelt indicated that "a year and a half" earlier he had given Norman's proposal "very careful study." I have been unable to determine whether the president actually learned of Norman's scheme prior to its presentation to the State Department in November 1938 or whether he was speaking casually and simply exaggerated. Welles to Norman, August 3, 1939, NA, 867n.01/1649.

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Epilogue

Chapter 8



September 11 and the Arab Reaction in *Al-Hayat*

Walid Kazziha

Introduction

In an attempt to monitor the Arab reaction to September 11, *Al-Hayat*, the Arabic daily based in London, has been selected for analysis. The choice of that particular newspaper was not accidental, but was based on the reasonable assumption that, since the mid-1980s, the reissuing of the newspaper from London had transformed it from a purely Lebanese publication to an Arab media organ. Since then an increasing number of Arab intellectuals, academics, and political commentators have regularly contributed to its pages, and despite the fact that the paper is owned by one of the royal princes of Saudi Arabia, the scope and range of subjects it had addressed itself to were pan-Arab in nature and extremely significant. Furthermore, it appears that both its owner and its editorial board have been keenly interested to have the widest range of contributions made by the different shades and currents of political opinion and cultural expression existing in the Arab World represented in their daily publication. As such, the newspaper became the mouthpiece of the various schools of thought in that region and a vibrant platform for debates and discussions on issues of current importance, as well as subjects of philosophical and political significance.

When September 11 took place, the newspaper did not refrain from opening its pages to a host of comments and opinions enunciated by

various writers and thinkers residing in the Arab World and abroad. As a result, numerous articles of an analytical and factual nature appeared during the first few months following the dramatic event. However, in time the frequency of these articles began to taper as the intensity of feelings on the subject declined, and the event, despite its tremendous significance, gradually became old news. At the same time, for an Arab audience, events in the region resumed their central stage position with the intensification of Israeli attacks on the Palestinians and the reoccupation of the West Bank, and with the growing American threat against Iraq.

Interest in the subject was revived on the first anniversary of September 11, but did not last more than a few days, after which things went back to normal with a heightened interest in the issue of Iraq.

In reviewing and analyzing the literature that has been published in *Al-Hayat*, whether it reflected the positions of Arab intellectuals or statesmen, two striking features seemed to be common to the majority of those who contributed their views. First, by and large Arabs tended to look at September 11 as a political event, devoid of any philosophical, cultural, or religious significance. It was not situated in any wider framework of theoretical relevance, except perhaps that of political challenge and response, nor was it seen as part of a global phenomenon in which evil stood against good and the world of order against the forces of terror. The event was mainly seen in the context of a political conflict between the United States and its political enemy Bin Laden, who chose to take the route of violence unwisely. Other Arabs may have serious grievances against U.S. policies and continue to have these grievances today more than they had on the eve of September 11, but they have chosen the road of dialogue and mutual understanding to resolve their differences with America. The dilemma that both parties shared, the United States and the Arabs, was political in nature and had political causes, and can successfully be resolved by political means. The lack of an overall vision for situating the event in a wider context may have been largely due to the retreat of Marxism as an ideology, and the reductionist nature of the various visions of the Islamists, while at the same time liberalism in an Arab context is so poorly defined to the point of being disfunctional.

Second, despite the variety of views and opinions expressed, there was relatively close proximity between the positions adopted by the Arab governments and officials on one side and Arab thinkers on the other. Somehow the event brought them together to see eye to eye as to the causes of what took place as well as the remedies to be implemented for coping with its consequences. While the majority

of Arab intellectuals have more often found themselves at odds with their governments, on this particular occasion their position drew closer to the stands taken by their governments. However, it should not be understood from this that the relationship between the two had undergone a change in which a partnership had evolved between the men of the sword and the people of the pen.

The Denial

In the first instance, on September 12 and 13 *Al-Hayat* reported the reaction of Arab officials and some political movements to the attacks against New York and Washington. Condemnation of the event was expressed by practically all Arab capitals, and messages of condolences were dispatched to President Bush. Even Baghdad at a later date expressed its regret and condemnation, but offered its condolences to the American people and not its leadership. Arafat considered the attack a great crime "against all of humanity" and led the campaign among the Palestinians in the occupied territories to donate blood to the surviving victims of the attack. Palestinians held a night vigil in East Jerusalem as others from neighboring Palestinian villages managed to cross the Israel roadblocks and join them. The Muslim Brothers, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the Organization of Islamic Unity, the rector of the Azhar mosque, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, and the League of Arab States all declared the act to be a violation of true Islamic principles. At the same time, however, the minister of defense in Israel rushed to condemn Islamic terrorism and pointed the lesson to the rest of the world that should be learned. He hoped "the world now will understand what we have warned against for so long" (Sept. 12).[1]

As the Arabs and Islam came increasingly under attack by the Israeli officials and the American media, the Arab response became more and more defensive, with a growing resentment for indiscriminately blaming all Muslims and all Arabs for the actions of a few individuals. The defensive posture first took the form of denial, despite the growing evidence coming out of Washington indicating that the perpetrators were Arab Muslims. Still, less than two weeks later on a tour in Europe, Egypt's President Mubarak wondered if those who had taken part in the attack were all Arabs or whether there had been among them some Europeans, perhaps even some Americans (Sept. 23). Similarly the minister of interior in Saudi Arabia, as late as October 16, complained that the United States was not cooperating satisfactorily with the kingdom in the area of security, and claimed that the Americans had not notified the authorities in Saudi Arabia of the

involvement of Saudi nationals in the attacks. He later recognized that there were Saudi nationals on the plane, but claimed that no one could prove that they had taken part in the attack (Dec. 22). By the same token, a good number of Arab intellectuals, journalists, and a sizeable portion of public opinion continued to suspect the evidence produced by Washington, and all kinds of conspiracy theories were gaining momentum. Some Azharites rejected the U.S. unilateral definition of terrorism and condemned its identification with Islam. They suspected that those who had planned such a meticulous attack were not Muslims, since Muslims did not have such capabilities (Sept. 22). This prompted a Kuwaiti writer, Mohamed Al-Rumaihi, to condemn these denials and to urge his fellow Arab intellectuals to opt for a scientific approach to understanding the events (Oct. 3)

In time, however, more evidence concerning September 11 became available, especially through *Al-Jazira*, whose credibility among the Arab audience was much higher than that of the American administration or the American media, and the momentum of wild stories eventually subsided, but did not disappear altogether.

After this, denial came dissociation. The Arabs and Islam, on trial by the West, were under pressure to take a stand against Osama Bin Laden and the young men who had led the attacks in September. The rector of the Azhar emphasized that Bin Laden did not represent a role model for the Muslims. He also criticized Bin Laden's views of *jihad*, and claimed that they only represented Bin Laden's own point of view. Furthermore, the rector condemned the attacks against innocent people and said that true Islam did not sanction such actions. Similarly, Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia dissociated Islam from the aggressive and illegitimate acts against innocent souls, while the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia declared during the meetings of the foreign ministers of Islamic states that Islam stood firm against terrorism and that its doctrines were utterly in contradiction to it (Oct. 11). Likewise, the majority of Arab intellectuals strongly denounced the attacks and believed that their repercussions were detrimental to the Arab causes, notably the Palestinian cause, and the status of Arab and Muslim communities in the United States and Europe. Edward Said, Fawwaz Guirgis, Wahid Abdel Majid, Mohamed Al-Rumaihi, and Ragheed Al-Solh among many others were most outspoken in their condemnation of the events of September 11. There was deep concern that immediately after the event Israel and its allies in the United States had exploited the situation to their own advantage by driving an irreconcilable wedge between the Arabs and the Bush administration.

Edward Said noted that Sharon had immediately grabbed the opportunity offered to him by the new circumstances since September 11 to launch his attacks against the Palestinian towns of Jenin, Gaza, Ramallah, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala, while his supporters in the United States were describing Arafat as the Palestinian Bin Laden (Sept. 23).

The Responsibility

As far as the Arab World was concerned, September 11 did not take place in a political vacuum. For a full year before that, the region had been engulfed in a high-pitched frenzy of anger and despair. The anger stemmed from the collapse of the peace process and the despair from the lack of any ray of light at the end of the tunnel. The Palestinians and Israelis were locked in a violent conflict, which threatened to dismantle the newly emerging Palestinian authority and even the fabric of Palestinian society. In the midst of all this, the new American administration appeared to be reluctant to use its good offices in the direction of reaching an equitable settlement. Instead it leaned more positively toward granting the new prime minister of Israel, Sharon, enough leeway to implement his long-entertained ambition of eliminating any hope for the emergence of a Palestinian state. In the Arab World, tempers were running high, not only against Israeli atrocities, but also against American inaction. Even those initiatives carried out at the instigation of the previous American administration, such as the Mitchell recommendations and later on the Tenet Plan, which was devised under the Bush administration, were ignored by Washington at the slightest sign of objection from Tel Aviv.

When the attacks against the Pentagon and New York took place, some of the simple minded thinkers perceived the event as a reprimand from God almighty, and in very few instances some signs of delight were noticed in the region. However, it was immediately muted by the attitude of the more thoughtful and articulate among the Arabs. Dr. Hanan Ashrawi on her way in East Jerusalem to place a flower in memory of those who died in New York and Washington explained:

> What has happened was a real tragedy. It was an act of terror against peaceful people. Perhaps the Palestinians are more susceptible than others to understand that feeling. There is nothing worse than being in one minute living in the safety of your own home, and then suddenly the next minute you find yourself in the midst of destruction caused by a tank shell or rocket from the sky.

She added that, for some of the children who celebrated the event,

> these were only children who only knew that the Apaches and the F-16s that killed them and destroyed their homes were American made, and that American politicians support the state that causes their agony and the continued occupation of their land, and deprives them of their lives and that of their fathers. However, when these children understood the magnitude of the tragedy, and realized that those who died were victims like them, feelings in the Palestinian street turned into deep sorrow, which cannot be described by words. (Sept. 13)

The political context within which Arab politicians and Arab intellectuals reacted to the event was dominated by the growing resentment against the U.S. role in supporting Sharon's policies. Both parties, the Arabs and Israel, were now poised to turn the event to their own advantage. In this contest the Arabs were at a disadvantage for a number of reasons. First the attackers were Arabs. Second, the Arab governments were not acting in unison, but were competing among themselves, trying to escape the blame and placing it on each other, and third, the Arabs lacked a coordinated effort to persuade American public opinion and the Congress of their point of view, unlike the Israelis, of course, who excelled in this area of public relations. The debate in the Arab World became very much an internal debate. It had a very persuasive logic to an Arab audience, but did not cut much ice with the outside.

The focus of the Arab argument both on the official as well as intellectual and public levels was to emphasize the indirect linkage between the attack on the Towers and the Pentagon and the specific issue of Palestine. This became the permeating theme that every Arab official and intellectual expressed. At the same time most of the Arab governments, including those who were considered to be the traditional friends of the United States in the region, were reluctant to endorse Bush's drive for the formation of an antiterror coalition. Their reluctance was motivated by a fear that such a policy would be highly unpopular among their own people, especially at a time when the United States did not seem at all inclined to inhibit the aggression of Sharon against Arafat and his people. Another reason, especially in the case of Saudi Arabia and some of the Gulf countries, may have been the reluctance of these states to commit themselves financially to a campaign against terror, which did not seem to have a well-defined objective, or a specific beginning and a specific end.

Egypt for example avoided any commitment beyond providing intelligence information and logistical support. It stressed the view

that the formation of an alliance against terror may end up dividing the world into competing camps. Instead Cairo tried to bypass the American demand by opting to act within the confines of the United Nations with a clear call for defining terrorism on a world scale by an international conference under the auspices of the UN. In the General Assembly, differences appeared between the British representative and his Egyptian counterpart. While the former insisted that terrorism could not be "rationalized" by claiming that it had political motives, the latter insisted that resistance to Israeli occupation could not be described as acts of terror. The Egyptian representative on that occasion was joined by his Saudi colleague who asserted that a definition of terrorism must include acts of terror exercised by the state, as was the case with Israel state terror (Oct. 3).

What seemed to be emerging were two competing points of view: one that stressed the linkage between terrorism and its political root causes while the other denied such a connection, fearing that by recognizing its political sources it may rationalize it and compromise the resolve to combat and eliminate it. Politically, the former view was more advantageous to the Arab position, because it argued that the Palestinians were exercising their legitimate right to resist the occupation, and therefore under no circumstances were they to be accused of terrorism. The latter view was supported by Israel and the United States, because it gave them a free hand to deal with their opponents without indulging in any moral or political debate. The position of Sharon's government and the position of the Bush administration gradually coincided to become identical on the subject. In the meantime, more than a year had passed since September 11, and Arab resentment to American policy in the Middle East had become stronger than ever.

Palestine

While many Arab politicians and thinkers were careful to renounce the attacks of September 11, when the time came to try and explain what had gone wrong, they did not refrain from identifying American policy in the Middle East as the main culprit. In the eyes of many Arabs it had paved the grounds for further violence in the region and more acts of terror.

Soon after the attacks, an Egyptian intellectual wrote reminding the Americans of the advice they had often given Egypt when it was in the midst of its campaign against its local Muslim militants. That advice drew the attention of the Egyptian government to the fact that

combating violent groups required not only security measures, but also political and social policies that would remedy the roots of discontent. He wondered if America would remember its own advice as it proceeded to combat terrorism (Sept. 16). Mubarak was even more direct, referring to American policy in the Middle East he said:

> Frankly Arab and Islamic public opinion cannot tolerate any more the policy of double standard adopted by the US. The peoples of the M.E. are sympathetic to the cause of the Palestinians, and their ultimate hope is to see the US supporting a just solution. (Sept. 23)

The connection between the attack against the United States on the one hand and America's attitude toward the Palestinian question, along with Bush's continuous support for Sharon, on the other was made by almost every Arab government official, journalist, and political thinker. In the Arab mind, America's special relationship with Israel seemed to determine its policies toward the Palestinians regardless of any moral, political, or legal consideration. In the course of condemning the attacks in New York and Washington, the grand mufti of Syria reiterated the general sentiment among the majority of Arabs. He claimed that what had befallen these two cities was by no means less ugly than the murders and destruction that was taking place at the hands of Israeli state terrorism in the occupied territories in Palestine (Sept. 16). A Saudi writer, Khaled Aldakhil, went even further and asserted that the United States in view of its strategic alliance with Israel greatly contributed to the widening of the scope of terrorism in the region, especially against the Palestinians (ibid.) In a sense, the United States was being viewed as a major partner in the process of oppressing and destroying an Arab people. Some intellectuals and statesmen warned the United States not to slip into the pitfall of fighting Islam and the Muslim peoples in its effort to fight terrorism. And despite Bush's early emphasis that the war was not against Islam, Arab political observers and Arab governments who were monitoring the American media detected a clear anti-Islamic tone, revealed also in slips of tongue made by some Western leaders, including Bush himself. To some, America was now moving on an imperialist course of action entering into the age of pax Americana and the exercise of arrogance of power. Many expected that the gap between it and the Arabs would widen, and that Israel was playing an instrumental role in driving it further into alienating an increasing number of Arabs and Muslims.

American policy in the Middle East and in the Islamic World increasingly became a subject of discussion among the Arab elites and

statesmen. They categorically denied their dislike of or hate for the American way of life or Americans in general, but many viewed American policies as aggressive, unfair, pro-Israeli, and highly prejudiced against the peoples of the region and their legitimate rights. From Afghanistan to Palestine, American policy stood to be condemned in the eyes of the Arab public and intelligentsia. The faint and half-hearted attempts by President Bush to express a vision of a Palestinian state or counsel moderation was drowned by his continuous cushioning of an Israeli leader known for his long history of atrocities against Arabs and Palestinians. Bush opened the doors of the White House to meet Sharon seven times in less than two years since the latter had become Israel's prime minister, while Arafat was ignored by second- and third-rate American diplomats, who were dispatched on occasion to reduce the waves of violence that so often engulfed the region during that time. Edward Said noted that the Bush administration was interested in only one thing, war mongering and the rattling of sabers, and not a rational investigation of what had taken place. The United States was not willing to consider the real causes of the event; how America itself and its policies could have contributed to the rise of Bin Laden and the whole movement of Islamic militancy. American voices that tried to explore these causes were overwhelmed by accusations of lack of patriotism and rationalization of terrorism. On the other hand, the majority of Arabs and Muslims wanted to focus the discussion precisely on this sensitive issue, American policy in the Middle East, its real intentions toward Palestine and Iraq, and why America was adopting double standards in the region whenever the questions involved its strategic partner, namely Israel.

The lack of response on the part of the United States opened up the door for speculation, sometimes quite wild in nature, as to the real American and Israeli intentions in the region. The attitude of the Bush administration did not help much to allay the fears and anxieties of the peoples and the regimes in the Arab world. On the contrary, the more Rumsfeld and company in Defense enjoyed their newly acquired role as TV celebrities, the more ambiguous and suspicious American intentions became. And when finally Bush included Iraq in his axis of evil, it became clear to everyone that the Arabs had become the second target after Afghanistan for the next American military onslaught. In the meantime, Israel was given a free hand to reoccupy the West Bank and turn Arafat into a hostage within his reduced headquarters in Ramallah, with daily measures of humiliation deliberately exercised by the occupation army against him personally and his

people. There was nothing admirable or morally acceptable about American policy in the Middle East, or its close partner Sharon. America seemed to be bent on exacting a very heavy toll from the Arabs for the September attacks.

A Qatari intellectual and scholar commented by saying that a good part of American public opinion had been hijacked by the Zionist media, and when the Americans wonder why the Arab masses are angry with them, it should be known that for a very long time America has ignored the Arabs and neglected their deepest concerns. Therefore, it was normal that the Arabs did not show the understanding required of them by the United States. He further added that the reluctance of the Arabs to offer support for the United States was due to the ambiguity and the double standards of American policy. He wrote that there was serious discussion that Iraq might be attacked, and that there was a potential threat that Syria, Hizballah, and the Palestinian resistance would be next in line (Oct. 27). President Mubarak's son, Gamal, put it very bluntly, he was reported saying that Arab and Egyptian enmity was not directed against America, but against its policies, especially those related to the Israeli exercise of violence against the Palestinians (Dec. 2).

Dialogue of Civilizations

Arab anger and deep frustration with U.S. policies did not prevent governments, leaders, and elites in the region from adopting measures that were intended to enhance the image of the Arabs and the Muslims in the West and particularly in the United States. Whether these measures were prompted by fear or conviction is difficult to say. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt found themselves in a rather awkward position vis-à-vis the United States, since most of the attackers were nationals of the former, while the leader of the attacks was an Egyptian. At the same time these countries were convinced that they had no moral or legal responsibility for the event. Egypt in particular, since the assassination of Sadat in 1981, had been in the forefront of countries combating Muslim militants, while Saudi Arabia had stripped Bin Laden of his Saudi nationality, and since the occupation of the Meccan mosque in 1979 by a group of fundamentalists had been trying to cope with the new threat. Both countries had succeeded to a large degree in squeezing out the militants from their own countries, but the latter had found safe havens in places like Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and some of the European capitals.

Suddenly after September 11, the two countries found themselves subjected to a vicious attack by the American media with an approving nod from some elements in the administration, which they could not explain or understand except by suspecting the influence of Israel's friends behind it. Faced with this offensive, some of the leading Arab governments became interested in the search for dialogue with the United States. It was not sufficient to have good relationships with the U.S. government or Bush personally or the senior members of the administration, but it was necessary to make an appeal to Congress and to American public opinion.

A variety of efforts were made by the majority of Arab regimes to indicate their willingness to cooperate with the United States in its war against al-Qaida and the Muslim militants. Immediately after the September attacks, many of the Arab governments pledged their support for the United States and moved rapidly to arrest and investigate those who were suspected of having radical activities or intentions. Security agencies in the Arab world welcomed the opportunity to exchange information with their American counterparts, and despite the friction that may have occurred here or there, on the whole, cooperation regarding security matters was quite rewarding. In some instances American intelligence and security teams were dispatched to the region to take part in the interrogation and investigation of some suspected elements. As a matter of fact, on a number of occasions members of the U.S. administration, including the secretaries of State and Defense, expressed their appreciation of and satisfaction with the level of cooperation and coordination the United States was receiving from its Arab allies in the region.

Furthermore, in an attempt to remedy the image of the Arabs and Muslims, which had been severely damaged by the events, the Arab governments became increasingly aware of the necessity of projecting a more positive image of themselves and their religion to the West and particularly the United States. In this respect a number of recommendations and measures were taken. In late October 2001, Saudi Arabia took the initiative to submit to a meeting of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) ministers of information a proposal to draw a strategic plan for explaining the true reality of Islam as a nonviolent and peaceful religion. A month later the ministers formed a committee to recommend practical steps for addressing the Western countries and societies to the GCC summit to be held in late December, with the proviso of creating a new satellite TV station broadcasting in English in the hope of conveying to its Western audience the true meaning of Islam (Nov. 29).

The general secretary of the League of Arab States also participated in the effort. He launched a campaign to forge official and nonofficial links with a variety of constituencies in the United States with the purpose of initiating a dialogue between the Arabs and America. He selected a distinguished Egyptian lawyer and Muslim scholar, well known for his moderate and enlightened views on Islam to act as the Arab League commissioner in "The Dialogue of Civilizations," as opposed to a clash of civilizations, and held a conference to which he invited some 73 Arab intellectuals, officials, and bureaucrats to discuss what was to be done. Preparations were also made by the League to hold a conference in May 2003 in the United States, which will be hosted by Arab Americans in an effort to cement the relationship between them and their countries of origin, so that they would be able to act as permanent representatives of their Arab culture and values. Semi-official attempts were similarly made, and some are in the process of being projected for the future, including a conference to be held in Kuwait, in early November 2002, organized by the Arab Forum, sponsored by Prince Hassan of Jordan, and to which he invited the Arab League secretary. The main purpose of the conference was to discuss Arab cooperation in the context of the new regional and global situation after September 11, and the prince emphasized Islam as a religion and a set of values innocent of the violent actions of a very extremist minority among its followers. In mid-March 2002, Crown Prince Abdullah opened a panel on the subject of Islam and the Dialogue of Civilizations organized by the Library of King Abdulaziz. Prince Khaled Al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who established the Arab Thought Foundation, launched the first activity of his organization on October 27, 2002, which was attended by some 400 Arab dignitaries and officials. Among the speakers were only two Americans, a former French ambassador, and a British journalist.

It is very difficult at this stage to gage the political impact of these official and semi-official efforts on the process of building bridges with the American public, the Congress, and the elites in the West. So far, these activities do not seem to have registered any significant progress toward a better understanding between the parties. There is no doubt that more time is needed, and it would be naïve to think that a few meetings here or there and a couple of conferences would do the job, especially since the nature of this dialogue does not lend itself to a push-button procedure. The Dialogue of civilizations is an accumulative process that needs a sustained effort for some time to come before it bears any tangible results. However, a starting point can be made if the Arabs realize that sooner or later they will have to

talk to the other and not only among themselves. What is so notable in all these bureaucratized and semi-official activities is the absence of the other. In the Arab League meeting Arabs talked to Arabs, in the Arab Forum meeting Arabs debated with other Arabs, in the Arab Thought Foundation Arab officials in essence listened to themselves for three days of meetings, and in the Arab League meeting in the United States Arabs had discussions with American Arabs.

At some point those in the Arab World who are interested in having a constructive dialogue will have to move out of their circular discussions and engage in a dialogue with Americans and Europeans, preferably those who do not see eye to eye with them, because ultimately there is no point in preaching to those who have already been converted. In this respect there are two activities that have taken place, one of which is ongoing, that are worth pursuing. In October 2002, the Brookings Institute held a conference in the Gulf, which was attended by a number of Americans, among them Martin Indyk, Thomas Friedman and others, which seemed to engage the interests of the two parties. Perhaps more important is the dialogue that was initiated in February 2002 on the American side by a group of well-known intellectuals and scholars, 60 of them who signed a letter explaining their serious reservations regarding Islamic societies and leaderships and the relationship of Islam to terrorism. In May 2002 some 135 Saudi intellectuals, *ulama*, and judges responded to that letter, and clarified the position of Islam regarding the issues at hand. In October, the American side replied with a second letter in which they expressed their agreement with the Saudis on some issues, but also pointed out some of the differences that still remained, and posed some questions for their Saudi counterparts to answer. It is expected that the Arab party will pursue the discussion; however, what is most interesting in this ongoing debate is that the two parties are beginning to find some common ground for a dialogue, and that in the course of the exchange, previously held perceptions are being corrected or at least clarified.[2]

Adjusting to America

The Arab regimes sought to remedy the deteriorating situation with the West by adopting politically motivated measures that focused on restraining the extremist tendencies among their own people. In Yemen, the government closed the independent religious schools and subordinated the teaching of Islam to the scrutiny of its own officials, and demanded that all religious instruction and programs be

governed by the laws and regulations of the ministry of education. In Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Abdullah held a number of meetings with the religious authorities and elite groups in which he warned in no uncertain terms that extremist thought had jeopardized the relationship of the kingdom with the United States, and that he had no intention of tolerating it any more. In a sense there was a recognition that the Saudi state had coexisted with the radical Islamic discourse, but from now on it intended to eliminate the provocations it posed by limiting religious discussion to those who were well versed with the teachings of Islam rather than those who had half-baked ideas about it. The new measures carried out by the Saudi authorities seemed at one point to precipitate some complaints on the part of the Islamists who claimed that the Saudi regime was reviewing the religious programs in schools with an eye to pleasing the United States. This accusation led the minister of education to deny categorically any change in the programs, which he insisted were in no way extremist, and added that Saudi Arabia would not accept any dictates on this matter from any outsider (March 3, 2002).

A general and uneasy feeling is emerging in the Arab World among a good number of thoughtful Arabs that, despite the denials, there is a growing tendency among some Arab regimes and Arab leaders to bend over backward to please the United States and the right-wing elements in the Bush administration. In this acrobatic exercise there is an ongoing process of reformulation of Islam and a reconsideration of Arab national priorities in such a way as to turn Islam into something timid and uninspiring and compromising the position of the Palestinian leadership, and even Iraq, for the sake of earning the blessings of the White House. So long as U.S. demands were limited to those issues that did not require the Arab regimes and leaderships to sacrifice their own base of power, they were more often willing to oblige. However, as soon as these demands were extended to include basic alterations in the nature of the regimes or changes that might erode their domestic, political, and economic standing, a crisis in the relationship with the United States was precipitated.

There is no doubt that soon after September 11, the United States had moved too quickly and too abruptly to place intolerable stresses on the regimes. The Arab governments were thus caught between the pressures from outside and the increasing anti-American sentiment of their own populace. As a result they had to select an erratic course of action, which on the one hand responded to some of the more urgent U.S. security demands but refrained from introducing substantial internal changes, and on the other, seemed to draw closer to

the sentiment of their own people by expressing their open support for the Palestinians and rejecting the war against Iraq. Less openly, the Arab regimes appeared to grant the United States more than what they had declared. This was often alluded to by some of the senior members of the American administration, who did not refrain from divulging that what they had been told behind closed doors was different from what was being said in public. Nevertheless, it would appear that the attitude of the Arab establishment was not entirely satisfactory to the more heavy-handed elements in the American administration, and a state of tension does exist today between the United States and its closest Arab allies in the region.

Conclusion

The Arab political and intellectual reaction to the events of September 11 as exposed on the pages of *Al-Hayat* soon afterward revealed that the Arab perceptions of the events were limited to its immediate political circumstances, without necessarily situating it within the context of a new international political order or relating it to a more comprehensive phenomenon in world politics. After a short period characterized by denying the involvement of Arab Muslims in the tragedy, there was a gradual recognition of the facts. In itself this did not generate any sense of guilt or responsibility on the part of Arabs and Muslims for the actions of a small minority of their coreligionists. Throughout the Arab World, with a few exceptions, there were overwhelming expressions of dissociation from the acts and thoughts of the attackers and those behind them. They were described in a variety of terms as a misled minority, ignorant of the true teachings of Islam, and puppets of the enemies of Islam. However, there was more understanding for their political motives, but by no means any endorsement of the acts of violence they had committed. These were unquestionably condemned by governments and intellectuals alike.

As the position of many Arab thinkers, scholars, and statesmen came to be known concerning the tragic events, the overwhelming majority blamed the U.S. policies in the Middle East for the tragedy, particularly those policies that pertained to Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. These policies were viewed as being detrimental to the interests and livelihood of the peoples of Iraq and Iran, let alone Pakistan and Afghanistan, extremely harsh and utterly unfair toward the Palestinians and their leadership, and so supportive of a murderous Israeli policy of occupation under the premiership of Sharon. If the attackers were to

be condemned for what they did, there was no escape from blame for American policies, especially under the Bush administration.

After the blame, there was a search for what was to be done, and in this context a variety of approaches were adopted. First, there were immediate security measures that had to be taken at the request of the United States. Many Arab countries hurriedly rushed to cooperate and coordinate their efforts with the various American security agencies. Others volunteered to initiate internal steps to cut down to size the Muslim activities that could have posed a potential threat to the stability of their countries. Simultaneously, Arab governments and elites sought to reintroduce Islam to the outside world as a moderate and peaceful religion, with emphasis on its universal values and acceptance of modernity. Finally, Arab leaders and intellectuals urged the launching of a sustained campaign, with the aim of activating a dialogue of civilizations as the most important element in the process of reaching a satisfactory and amicable understanding with the West.

However beneath all that, the Arab World stands today fearful of what America could do to it, conscious of its weakness and impotence, but at the same time angry with itself and with the other, suffering from humiliation, violence, and the threat of violence, and searching for an avenue of salvation. Bin Laden and his like may have had the wrong answer, but the search continues by many, who may sooner or later come across the appropriate answer. In the meantime the United States could determine the nature of the contemporary encounter with the Arabs and Islam by defining its course of action. Will it be further humiliation of the other or a serious dialogue?

NOTES

1. The dates refer to the publication date of the respective issue of *Al-Hayat*. If not specially indicated, all quotes are from the year 2001.
2. For more information on the debate see American values.org.

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